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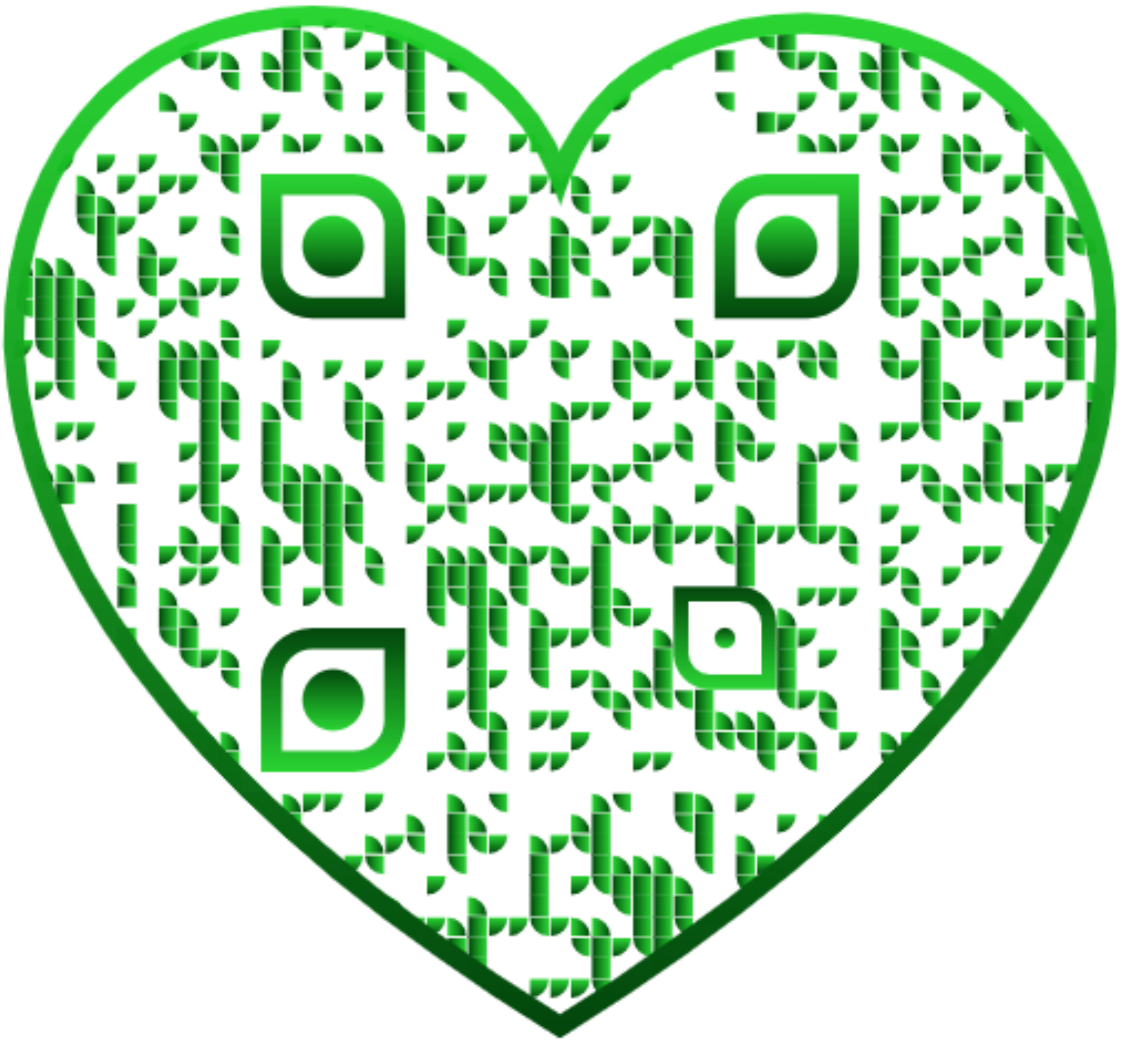
ISSUE 334



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LIFE IS PRECIOUS

YOU NEVER KNOW what kinds of crazy left turns it could take or, most pertinently, when it could be snatched away from you completely. And few have been left contemplating that more than Dave Mustaine. After a year battling cancer, his announcement that he had beaten that most evil of diseases sent a wave of positivity through London's Wembley Arena earlier this year. This month, we travelled to his adopted hometown of Nashville for an open and emotional interview about Dave's journey over the past two years, how the cancer diagnosis and eventual prognosis affected him and, of course, what it all means for that now long-overdue new Megadeth album. We're thankful to have him with us.

Also in this issue, we celebrate 40 years of *British Steel* with Judas Priest, find out how Trivium managed to finally get their momentum back on track, and pay tribute to Type O Negative legend Peter Steele, who left this mortal coil 10 years ago next month. Like we said, life really is precious. Appreciate it and those around you while you can. Stay safe, friends and…

HORNS UP

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MEET THE BAND

JAMIE BLAINE
WRITER
Lovingly borrowed from our chums at *Bass Guitar* mag, where Jamie plies much of his trade, our man in Nashville makes his *Hammer* debut this month courtesy of a candid cover feature with MegaDave. He did such a stellar job, we may have to have him back…

JEREMY SAFFER
PHOTOGRAPHER
Having shot Dave many times over the years, Jeremy was the obvious choice to man our cover shoot this issue. He got to put a metal icon in front of the lens, *and* had a much-needed break from hanging with horror movie actors and polishing his Funko collection.

ALI COOPER
WRITER
Ali does so much for the front section of *Hammer* we should rename it Ali Avenue. This month, she finds out about Download's recent changes, fires your questions at In This Moment's Maria Brink and gets some Life Lessons from Delain's Charlotte Wessels.

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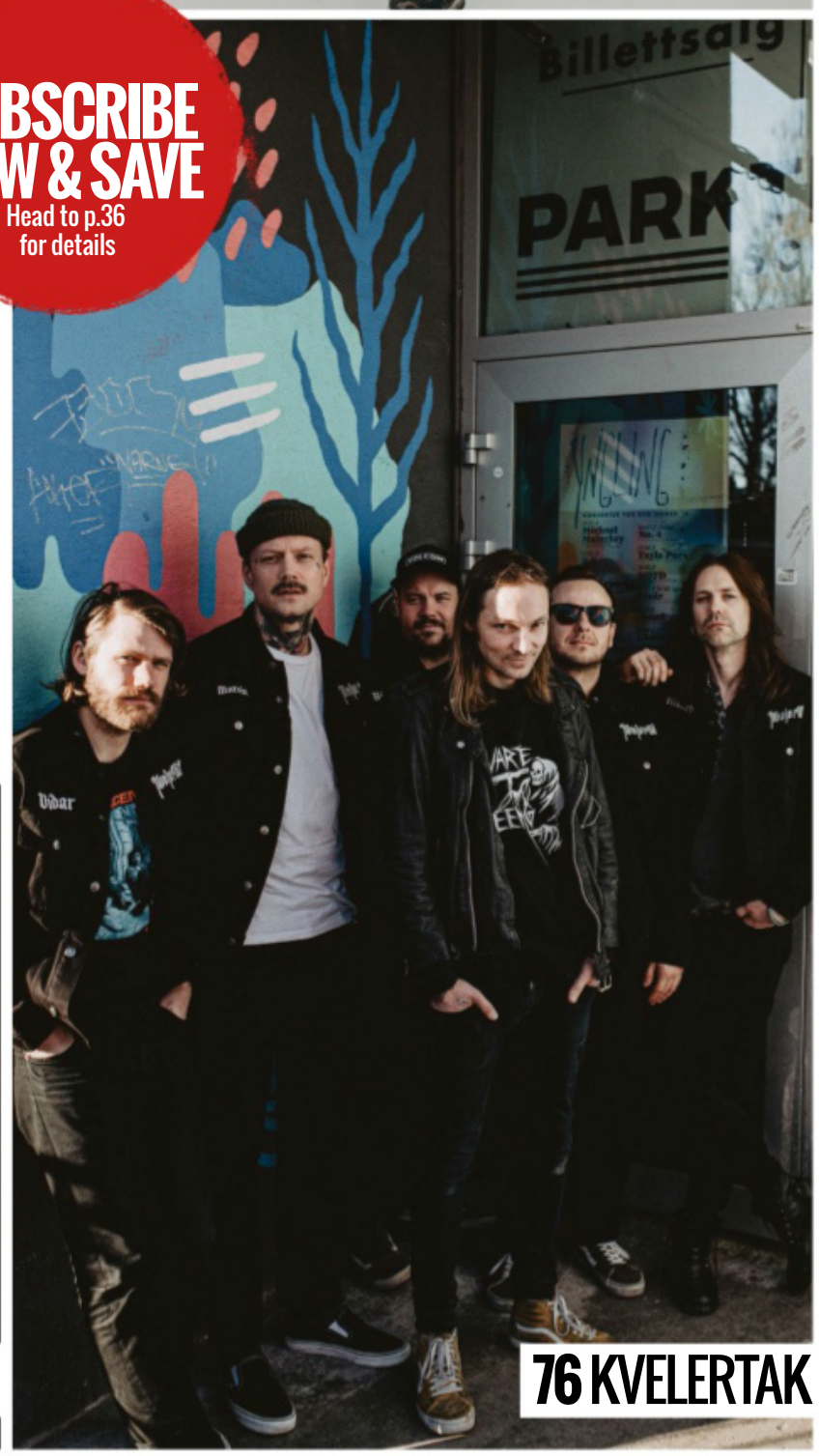

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THE BIG PICTURE

ENTER: PAPA IV

IT WAS A moment we all knew would come eventually, but we still weren't ready. Midway through the final show of the *Prequelle* era at Mexico City's Palacio de los Deportes, after apparently and unceremoniously killing off the Papa Nihil character, Ghost would finally anoint Cardinal Copia as a Papa all of his own.

It came out of nowhere. A dozen Sisters Of Sin besieged the stage, swarming the Cardinal to strip him of his suit as the onlooking crowd began to holler in anticipation.

As the Sisters backed away, Ghost's frontman would emerge a man reborn. Bedecked in a dazzling new set of Papal robes and plastered in corpsepaint, it was official: Cardinal Copia was history, Papa Emeritus IV had arrived.

What this means for Ghost's future is anyone's guess. They're not due to play again in 2020; Tobias Forge will likely take a brief and well-earned rest before holing up to record Ghost's fifth studio album. In the meantime, we'll just have to wait and see how Papa IV will fit into the bigger picture. And stress over who's going to play that sax solo in *Miasma* from now on…

JACOB SHEPHERD

THE HOT TOPIC

DOWNLOAD GETS SERIOUS

The UK's biggest rock and metal festival is tackling climate change and mudbaths in one fell swoop

WORDS: ALI COOPER

WITH SUMMER RIGHT around the corner, Download have made a big announcement that will greatly impact fans' experiences. The organisers of the UK's biggest rock and metal festival, this year headlined by Kiss, Iron Maiden and System Of A Down, have made some drastic changes for those making the pilgrimage to Castle Donington in June.

2019 saw another weather washout for Download, with torrential rain turning the festival's Village hub and campsites into muddy trenches from the very first day. While they've introduced numerous structural changes in the festival layout over the last 10 years, the event has consistently struggled with providing seamless access to the Village, where festivalgoers can buy food, supplies and merchandise. This year, however, the Download team have announced vital changes to the site, most importantly relocating the Village to a hardstanding tarmac lake for 2020 – so no more trudging through knee-deep mud for half an hour to reach that elusive inflatable mattress.

"YOU'LL REACH THE FURTHEST TENTS IN JUST 25 MINUTES"

"Download Festival have reduced walking distances for festival attendees by moving campsites, car parks, the transport hub and The Village," reveal organisers in an official statement. "When campers were looking at almost an hour walk to campsites from The Arena, the new campsite locations mean that Downloaders can reach their tents in the furthest campsites from The Arena in just 25 minutes. As The Village is now a central hub between campsites, this can be reached from the majority of campsites in 10 minutes or less."

Weekend campers arriving via car this year have the addition of a new East Car Park, improving access to the site, and particularly helpful to Downloaders travelling from the north is the new Castle Donington bypass. According to Download, the new parking zone means only a two-minute walk to the nearest campsite – which will be a massive bonus for Monday morning hangover sufferers.

Additionally, the festival have upgraded the experience for access customers by redirecting the route from the Village to the access camp entirely on solid ground, plus an increase in the capacity of the access camper van site, relocated on a new flatter surface. This way, nothing should get in the way of having fun this year, whatever the weather.

IN LIGHT OF growing climate and sustainability concerns hitting the mainstream via the Extinction Rebellion movement and activist Greta Thunberg, the Leicestershire festival states Download 2020 is committed to reducing its carbon and ecological footprint.

"Download take climate change seriously and as part of our Green Nation charter, we are using 100% renewable Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil biofuel to power the event this year," adds the statement. "HVO is a form of renewable diesel that has been produced from vegetable fats and oils and offers a significant reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. This act will reduce Download's carbon emissions by 60%."

Last year's event saw a reduction of single-use plastic on site, promoting

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the use of reusable bottles in the arena and refilling at water stations, which experienced some teething problems at first. For 2020, the festival have ensured all water bottles sold on site will be renewable, plant-based bottles, as well as redesigning and improving the flow for bottle refill stations to speed up the process that caused long queues in 2019.

There's more. Finding a food stall that caters to allergies and dietary needs was once the bane of life at a music festival. With the rising popularity of vegan and alternative food options, 2020's incarnation of Download has moved toward providing more choice on site, with 40% more vegan and gluten free stalls, plus 40 vegetarian traders working the fest.

Downloaders from recent years may be familiar with the overflowing crowd at the Dogtooth Stage and battling through the hordes for a glance at the fourth stage's line-up. This year, organisers are expanding the tent to make room for 4,050 metalheads to catch the likes of Electric Wizard, Sepultura and Periphery.

In addition to these shake-ups, as Download approaches its 20th anniversary, this year's festival is recognises its colourful history with the burial of a time capsule to be opened in May 2078 – 75 years after the first Download took place.

"The legacy of Download deserves to be celebrated so we will be burying a time capsule on site during Download weekend," Melvin Benn of Festival Republic notes. "Artists will add to it, and I would love for Downloaders to be involved by suggesting items to include and becoming a part of history."

For those about to rock, we'll see you in the field… or on the tarmac.

DOWNLOAD FESTIVAL TAKES PLACE JUNE 12-14 – SEE P.107. FOR TICKETS AND MORE INFO, HEAD TO WWW.DOWNLOADFESTIVAL.CO.UK

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10 THINGS WE LEARNED THIS MONTH

What's been blowing our tiny brains

WE'VE JUST LAUNCHED METAL HAMMER JAPAN!
Head over to www.metalhammer.com to find out more about our new sister mag. Kanpai!

CORONAVIRUS SUCKS
As well as the more serious issues it has caused, the impact it's already having on touring bands and festivals is awful. Stay safe out there, friends.

COREY TAYLOR'S SON HAS A BAND
They're called Vended, they recently played their first show, and we're all old now.

Ozzy: unstoppable

OZZY WANTS TO GO AGAIN
Ordinary Man has barely dropped and the Double O fancies doing another album. You can't stop him!

ROBB FLYNN LOVES STREAMING
Like, *really* loves it. You all saw that post right? The man is a walking streaming ambassador.

MARILYN MANSON IS BEING MYSTERIOUS
Is the God Of Fuck going to drop a new album soon?

METALLICA HAVE A VINYL CLUB
Why does this make us think of Het and Lars sitting around with fans drinking tea and listening to Diamond Head presses?

THE NEW DEFTONES ALBUM IS READY
According to Frank Delgado anyway. We're ready for it! It's been four years since *Gore*…

HYBRID THEORY IS 20 THIS YEAR
And Linkin Park have some celebrations planned. We're in.

GREG PUCIATO HAS A SOLO ALBUM
The former Dillinger man recently released first track, *Fire For Water.*

YOU HAVE TOO MANY COSTUME CHANGES

...and some other wild accusations and unusual queries you aimed at In This Moment's Maria Brink

WORDS: ALI COOPER • PICTURES: JEREMY SAFFER

HAVING UNLEASHED THEIR seventh album, *Mother*, this month, theatrical metallers In This Moment hold 2020's fate in their hands. We challenged frontwoman and mistress of costume changes Maria Brink to answer your burning questions about their new era, collaborating with metal icons and what we can expect from ITM shows of the future.

What's the correct number of costume changes for a 45-minute festival set? Three seemed excessive.
Jo Fleischer (Facebook)

"I have to do what's good for me. The show we've built is almost as if each song is its own movie, I love how our show keeps you on your toes the whole time — we're doing something only we are doing right now. I respect some people's point of view worrying that we're lacking something else because we're too focused on one thing, but we work really hard to balance everything equally. I'm also trying to do more layering so I can change the visuals just by shedding something without having to go away and change into something else. I know stripped-down shows can be beautiful and perfect in their own right and that's who those artists are, but for us, it's almost like a play; when a song or a scene changes, the colours and the looks change, and I have performers to add the performing arts element on top of the music that I'm really passionate about. Someday it'll be my legacy that I leave behind so I work really hard to stay innovative and approach all the different artistic levels that come with what I do."

On the last album you went a different route from *Blood* and *Black Widow*: will this album continue on the path that *Ritual* set? Will it mesh sounds from previous albums or will you forge a new sound and go in a different direction? Basically, what can fans expect from *Mother*?
@jcitydgaf (Twitter)

"*Mother* is the next level for us. There's definitely a transition happening; I think you can really hear it and feel it with the visuals you're going to see at shows. There's new things you haven't heard from us before, and obviously the empowering Queen *We Will Rock You* cover we're doing with Taylor Momsen and Lzzy Hale. It's such an honour to sing with them and to do something so powerful together. All you can do is your best try to get your soul out there so people will either love it or not. That's why I'm always trying to evolve and experiment; I don't want to be just one thing. I want to be experimental, evolve and grow, go to that next empowering place in myself, and I think you can hear that on *Mother*."

In This Moment: caught red-handed

If you had an unlimited budget, what would you add to your stage show?
Lisa Abraham (email)

"I'd add in Cirque de Soleil shows, extra over-the-top things would be coming down from the ceilings and I'd probably levitate over the crowd! Maybe someday I'll do those things. It's one

Maria Brink:
always evolving

“I WANT TO LEVITATE OVER CROWDS”

step at a time but I love live shows and that feeling of being able to perform just as much as the music."

What's the hardest thing about being the frontwoman of an internationally famous metal band?
@itsedenexile (Twitter)
"My biggest challenge is being away from my family. My family is the most important thing in the world to me – they're my lifeline, my everything. The time you have with the people you love is more precious than anything in this world, more than fame or money. It's hard for families to be torn apart and there's a lot of sacrifices families have to make, so I want to just honour them and love them because they know a lot of what I do is for them too. We're really learning to balance things out so if I have to be gone from home for two months, then I need to be home for another two months."

What was it like covering Phil Collins' iconic classic hit, *In the Air Tonight*?
@Jon_Gronsdahl (Twitter)
"I love that song, it's so beautiful and haunting and totally has its own lane. Embracing songs I've always loved and being able to do our own thing with them is something I've come to love. I remember first hearing that song and thinking, 'Wow, what is this?' Even when you heard that song when you were little, it brought a certain emotion and mystery over you. Maybe you just couldn't place your finger on it or understand it back then. All the great songs are scary to cover; you don't want to touch them because they're so perfect, but you've got to think of it in the way that you're not trying to make it better, you're just trying to do your interpretation of it. So when I let go of that pressure, I love it."

How do you come up with your costumes for the live shows?
Hayley Leith (email)
"It starts with the music first so while the music is happening, I'll come up with an energy for the album, put pictures and colours together to make an artistic moodboard of imagery to share with my bandmates, the label and producers etc. I listen to a song and start feeling what emotions it evokes or what it means to me; something might evoke reds and oranges, fires and something visually stunning or

"I'M OBSESSIVE ABOUT OUR SHOWS. I CAN'T STOP"

Twinkle the chihuahua just out of shot

powerful, then the next might just be me and a piano. I'm an obsessive person about this; my mind is continuously thinking about it and I can't stop it."

Do you have any pets?
Cat Hadder (email)
"Yes and if I didn't tour for a living, I'd have so many animals! Right now I only have a chihuahua, Twinkle, and she's fierce, she's like my little dragon. She goes everywhere with me, she flies and tours with me, goes to video shoots, so whoever hangs out with me hangs out with my dragon. I love animals more than people and my dream is to have an animal sanctuary someday, own a bunch of land and live on the water."

Do you think there's a stigma or hesitance for management hiring female crew members within the music industry?
@kaya_anna (Twitter)
"I don't think so. If you look at my crew, we're all women. When we roll through, we have more women in our crew than we do men and they're badasses all over the place. I'm seeing a lot of women in other camps too – tour managers etc. I have a female stage manager, a female tour manager – there's definitely powerful women out there representing right now. No matter who you are, you can't let anything hold you back, so even if there is a stigma saying it's harder, do what you do and you'll make it happen."

You've collaborated with some amazing artists – anyone else left on your hit list?
Devin Bryant (email)
Trent Reznor would be a dream to work with, plus Chino Moreno from Deftones who's been my favourite singer for a long time, his voice is super-angelic and so real. Probably Maynard James Keenan for his voice, and Stevie Nicks would be amazing. I'm also in love with Wardruna, their music is just insanely beautiful."

Maria, what makes you truly happy?
@russell_trench (Twitter)
"My family, love and peace – for me and for everyone else. I'm always saying 'give me some peace' and I choose peace over drama, over a lot of things, and I always try to seek that. I'm a naturally anxious person so I have to keep my surroundings almost hypnotising me onto a nice, healthy wavelength. My house is like a spa: there's water fountains and fires, there's tranquil music playing and smells of oils burning at all times!"

***MOTHER* IS OUT NOW VIA ATLANTIC**

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THE SLAYLIST

LARISSA STUPAR

Who'd have thought one of metal's most progressive young minds would begin her journey with Kiss?

WORDS: RICH HOBSON

"I GREW UP in Russia in the 90s so I remember listening to tapes and records my parents had. **KISS** was one of my favourites as a kid – my parents would play them all the time. *I Was Made For Loving You* is a classic. Later I started listening to things through my sister; she was a huge **NIRVANA** fan and also had records by bands like The Prodigy. Nirvana seemed quite exotic because they were playing stuff we'd never heard before, rebellious music in a place where there wasn't much rebellion; I think that's why metal became so big in Russia.

We moved to Germany when I was 10 and I'd stay up late (especially on weekends) watching all kinds of music and anime shows like *Cowboy Bebop* on MTV. After midnight they'd play Slipknot, Korn and Limp Bizkit – the first time I saw **SLIPKNOT**'s *Wait And Bleed* my mind was blown. It was like watching a horror movie, but so much cooler. It was a defining point; here was something I was picking for myself, not because somebody else got me into it. I'd be hanging out with my best friend at the time singing and jumping along to the music; when other girls were singing along to Britney Spears with a hairbrush, we were doing it to Slipknot and Linkin Park!

As I became a teenager I got more into DIY culture through punk and hardcore, going to anti-fascist protests. I was hanging out with people who were more politically involved and started developing my own sense of ideology, so **DISCHARGE** were an enormous discovery. There were a lot of squats around at the time so people would just put shows on; I also used to put shows on myself and got involved in the culture, especially as big bands didn't often play near my hometown and I really wanted to hear live music. **HATEBREED** were one of the bands that defined metal and hardcore for me. They combined all the things I loved; they're incredible and I still love them today. We're going on tour with them and Parkway Drive and that's such a big dream come true – songs like *I Will Be Heard* are just fucking *brutal*.

"THEY LIKED BRITNEY. I LIKED SLIPKNOT"

Venom Prison's frontwoman owes it all to those *Crazy, Crazy Nights*

LISTEN NOW
Listen to Larissa's mix at tinyurl.com/LarissaSlaylist

When I was 16 I discovered straight edge. Being vegan at the time as well, finding a band like **EARTH CRISIS** reflected something I strongly believed in and *Firestorm* is their anthem, one of the hardest straight edge songs you'll ever hear. Continuing with the hardcore stuff, **DOWN TO NOTHING** are also one of my favourite bands in both straight edge and wider hardcore. I always loved them live, moshing about and stage diving to this incredible music – it means a lot to me.

The first time I heard *You Suffer* by **NAPALM DEATH** I was like, 'What the fuck?' and ended up going back and playing it over and over again. For a band with such a political message and a band that mean so much, *You Suffer* is a song that speaks for itself; you don't need lots of words or long instrumentals to let people know exactly how you feel about something and what's happening in the world. Our old drummer brought **DRAGGED INTO SUNLIGHT** to me and I was blown away. Seeing them live was a strange experience, because even though I loved them on record live they translated so much better with the visuals, the lights and the strobes making it utterly captivating – I couldn't move from my spot!

LIL PEEP is another act that combined genres to define himself and what he was. It turned into a sad story about this lost boy who got successful with music that he loved doing and working on, then died aged 21 just as that music started blowing up. Suffering with depression myself it was good to see that somebody else has felt this way and that people also connected to that through his music. A lot of these new artists are young, but they're redefining rap and trap by speaking about their struggles with mental health, drug addiction and how it destroys their lives, but they also can't stop doing it. It's not common – especially for men – to speak about their emotions, so it's amazing that there are all these people looking to redefine this music and make it more relatable." H

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Music For Nations

LIFE LESSONS

CHARLOTTE WESSELS

The Delain singer is in 15 years deep and has no plan to change course yet. Here's what she's learned so far

WORDS: ALI COOPER

A WHOPPING 15 years since their inception, Dutch symphonic metallers Delain are ready to unleash their colossal sixth (and hilariously titled) album, *Apocalypse & Chill*. With a busy 2020 ahead, and having wrapped up a handful of UK headliner dates in February, we quizzed songstress and key songwriter Charlotte Wessels on the hard life lessons her years in the music industry have taught her so far.

CHANGE IS A GOOD THING

"Martijn [Westerholt, keyboards] and myself have been the core songwriting team for Delain since the very beginning but Timo [Somers, guitars] has really flourished on *Apocalypse & Chill*; he's not just making arrangements and writing parts but writing entire songs, like *One Second*. The fact that we play live so much has had an impact on how we write this time. We're writing from the idea of how it will work when we perform. Martijn did the entire production again and he's done a great job! We wanted to do some things we haven't done before while staying really true to our sound – we've added in some real choirs, which is something we've wanted to do for quite some time."

DON'T JUDGE A BOOK BY ITS COVER

"A lot of things [in the process for this album] remained as they were for [2016's] *Moonbathers*. For example, in the approach to song-writing, a lot has stayed the same. But when it comes to production, some things developed – especially the name. Some people think we're joking! [The title isn't] the gothic, romantic, frozen moon thing we usually go for. I had a demo called *Apocalypse & Chill* that didn't go anywhere, and when I looked at all the songs on this album, all the post-apocalyptic content combined with people's attitude today, it fits."

LET YOUR OWN WORK SHINE

"There are a few guest spots on *Apocalypse & Chill* – such as Yannis Papadopoulos from Beast In Black and a guest violinist who used to play for Eluveitie – but not as many as we've had in the past. I think that was a conscious choice. In the past, we've always let ourselves be led by people that we really like but didn't exactly fit into the music, but the exposure to their fanbase was also a factor. We didn't think about that at all for this album; we were just doing our own thing and it felt like a perfect fit."

'FEMALE-FRONTED' IS NO MORE

"I've spoken out against the 'female-fronted' genre in the past and I've always thought it's been frowned upon. Because there are, like, three women in metal and all the rest are guys, it was a term that used to work to group those bands together. I think by now people realise that there are women in metal, death metal, nu metal, symphonic metal and they're all vastly different things, so I'm really happy to know people are warming to the idea of ditching the term altogether. For me, it wasn't just about the term being disrespectful or inaccurate; it was also not nice to the rest of the band to let their genre be decided by what's hanging (or not hanging) between the frontperson's legs! That's taking such a small part of the ingredients of the band. I'm still optimistic and I hear a lot of things that keep me optimistic both online and offline. I think we're heading in the right direction; in general I think there's more equality than there has been in the past. I also feel people are becoming more and more aggressive in their opinions and less open to conversation, as more conversations are taking place anonymously and behind screens. I'm not sure how that's going to develop."

"PEOPLE THINK THIS ALBUM TITLE IS A JOKE!"

CRITICISM CAN BE MOTIVATIONAL

"There are some conversations that really stick with you in life. I remember very early on in my career, when I was 15, my classical singing teacher once told me, 'If I were you, I'd leave that band and just go join a choir – everybody is always looking for sopranos like you.' She basically didn't see the value in any non-classical music but to me, that was such a 'Wait, I'll show you' moment in my life. It's more reverse psychology than the best advice anybody's ever given me but it had the most impact on what I ended up doing, even though it was a long time ago."

STOP TRYING TO MAKE EVERYONE ELSE HAPPY

"You simply cannot please everybody. That was a tough lesson for me. In a band like this, you're doing everything together and when you're writing with multiple people, you're already making compromises. Within my creative group that's fine, but there's a limit to the amount of people you can keep happy while also staying true to you and your artistic vision. I felt like I really had to learn that the hard way because teams in music can get very big and it quickly becomes very complicated to have everybody on the same page. Sometimes you try to compromise too much and you end up with something nobody is happy with, so I'd rather have some very excited people and some saying 'meh' than having everybody on a medium level of excitement."

INSPIRATION CAN COME FROM ANYWHERE

"I have different inspirations for different parts of music. I love Nick Cave for lyrics and writing words in general, and Thom Yorke for music. I'm always super-impressed by how Radiohead keep changing and evolving their sound, they've been my favourite band forever. Also, Amanda Palmer for the way she navigates the music industry. I think it's very impressive what she's built and how she is so radically herself in everything she does."

SET YOUR GOALS HIGH

"Before Delain, I was in a band that had a side-project that Martijn was working on as well, that's how we met. He asked if I could write a few lyrics for this project he was working on and it grew from there into me being part of the first album, but it was still supposed to

PRESS

Charlotte knows you can't please all the people all the time

Delain are loving life on Napalm

"I DON'T KNOW WHAT DAY IT IS ON TOUR"

be just a project. Now we're 15 years later and Delain have grown so much. If I could go back, I'd tell myself, 'Hey dude, this is going to be the next 15 years of your life at least so go all in, this is the real deal!' There's so many crossroads in life and you're always going for the long-term thing but one day you wake up and it's such a big part of your life and it's amazing."

FIND A LABEL THAT LOVES YOU FOR YOU

"When Roadrunner Records were sold and we were at Warner all of a sudden, Warner got a lot of bands alongside all the bands they actually wanted out of Roadrunner like Nickelback and such. I had the idea they were like, 'OK, we have Delain, let's see what we can make of it so people will buy it.' They were looking into what we could become, which was very different from our own vision. When we were talking with Napalm Records, it was a night and day difference to that because they wanted to work with us for us, for what we already were. Of course we have our disagreements from time to time, but we really noticed what it was like to be with a label with all the best intentions for us."

TOURING LIFE ISN'T ALWAYS EASY

"You become a family of sorts when you spend so much time together on a bus, and everyone develops their own little habits to keep themselves sane. Touring can be loads of fun and it usually is, but it's also very tiring at times. One of my things is I don't really sleep well when the bus is driving, so at the beginning of the tour I'm usually alright but a few weeks on, I don't know what day or time it is. It gets really weird but everybody has their own routines and it's just a matter of giving each other the space to do what you need to do. In the end, it all comes together during those hours on the stage. There's always days off where we go on hikes to nature parks. There's not a lot of them but we always try to do it."

OUR NEW SONGS MIGHT SURPRISE YOU

"*One Second* is going down so well live already, I really like singing with Timo and it's great being able to do that song together, I'm so happy to have that little duet. *Combustion* is really nice for me because I finally get a break! I think *Let's Dance* will become a favourite, it's kind of a party song and it gets people moving very quickly even though they've never heard the song before. It gives off a vibe that people can automatically roll with and it's very nice to still get that kind of energy back from the audience."

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IN THE STUDIO

ENSLAVED

Fifteen albums and almost 30 years into their career, the boundary-pushing Norwegians are still finding ways to transform extreme metal

WORDS: RICH HOBSON

Ivar Bjørnson: enjoying his return to the light

ENSLAVED'S OUTPUT THIS past decade may have skewed towards proggy, almost post-metal flavoured grandeur, but that doesn't mean they've lost any of their bite. So when founder Ivar Bjørnson tells you their newest record is taking a more direct approach, you know it's time to batten down the hatches and prepare for an extreme metal assault unlike any other…

Hey! How are things in the studio?
"We're done! The album's mastered and on its way to Nuclear Blast. It's mind-boggling that we're on our 15th album; *E* was the end of the mid-era Enslaved line-up and now we have revitalised ourselves and the writing/rehearsal process has been amazing. After 29 years it's cool to still be able to say we've done something we haven't before."

Judging from your Instagram post, things were looking suitably frosty for the recording of the album?
"Yeah, I'll definitely remember this as our dark, frosty and misty record! We generally record in winter, but this year has stood out so much it influenced the album. Fascination Street [Studios] is in the forest, so I got up at 6 each day to drive to the studio in the dark. I'd sit in the studio all day, eat, then come home in the dark too. These past few weeks made me realise I hadn't seen the sun in a while… but it kind of works for the album!"

At this point it feels like Enslaved records can go pretty much anywhere…
"That feeling of absolute freedom is our only guideline. You could say that every period of Enslaved has inspired this new record. It's still a bit too fresh to fully appreciate right now, so we'll leave it to you people in the sunlight to make your judgements."

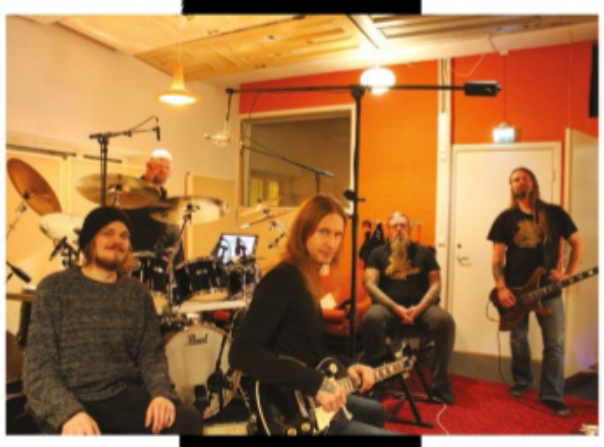
THE FACTS

ALBUM:
15

STUDIO:
Duper & Solslottet Studios, Bergen. Fascination Street Studios, Stockholm

PRODUCER:
Self-produced, mixed by Jens Bogren

EXPECT:
A frosty heart of black metal dwelling within a colossus of prog metal grandeur



What's the anvil picture you posted all about?
"It started out with Iver [Sandøy] and I working on his drums – he'd hit this small bell he has built into the kit that is like a miniature anvil. We just couldn't get enough of these sounds, to the point where we ended up deciding to get an actual anvil. One of Grutle's [Kjellson, frontman] few neighbours has an anvil collection, so one of the evenings we went over to see this really nice gentleman whose basement was filled with anvils… and Enslaved merchandise! We tested some out and found the perfect one to use on one of our most powerful songs."

What themes have inspired this new record?
"This record is a journey through darkness, but there is a surprising amount of light in there too. It's about paradoxes and balance – how each side needs to find balance with its opposite in order to exist. It's a celebration of all those things that grow and bubble under the surface, both psychologically and philosophically."

Iver has worked as producer on some of your past records. Was it strange for him to go from producing to playing as part of the band?
"I think there's a few times that – and I don't know if the saying works as well in English – he met himself in a doorway. It's where you make rules or expectations, but then don't apply them to yourself, like a parent telling their child not to smoke then getting caught themselves. He would push our previous drummer in the studio, but now he's realising that sometimes he was being a bit too harsh and it's not as easy as it first appeared!"

These days it feels like Nordic culture is a lot more recognisable in the mainstream. How do you feel Enslaved fit in with that?
"The age of information is also an age of disillusionment; what you see around the world is an anger and bitterness that drives a lot of people out, so people find solace in simple, older things like family, home and of course in Skaldic tradition. Some bands aim to take something old and do something new with it; we feel our mission is to take contemporary sounds and convey something old with it." H

ENSLAVED'S NEW ALBUM, *UTGARD*, WILL BE OUT ON MAY 22 VIA NUCLEAR BLAST

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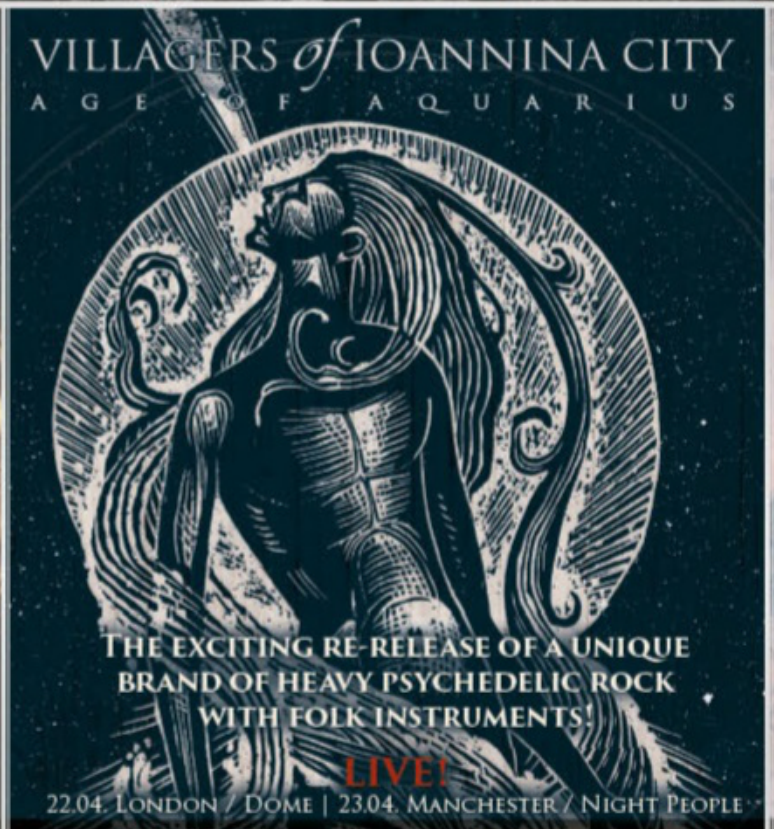

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THE STORY BEHIND

LOVE? BY STRAPPING YOUNG LAD

It was the unlikely breakthrough single for one of metal's most misunderstood artists. Just don't ask Devin about that horror video…

WORDS: STEPHEN HILL

SYL: feeling the Love?

BACK IN THE early part of the new millennium, Devin Townsend was, by his own admission, in a bad way. "To a certain degree my entire career has been based on me trying to unfuck myself," he half smiles when asked to recall a difficult chapter of his life. "During that period I was screwed up, but totally by my own hand. This is no 'Oh woe is me' thing; I had just become totally fascinated and immersed in my creative process and I hadn't had kids yet. I think, in hindsight, I was actively going out of my way to make myself crazy so that I could write crazy music."

Today, we all recognise Devin one of as heavy metal's true visionary voices, but in 2004 he was treated with a touch of suspicion by the mainstream metal world. Despite having put his name to records like Strapping Young Lad's crushing *City* and his stirring and epic solo album *Ocean Machine* – both now rightly regarded as classics – he had yet to cross over to metal's wider fanbase. Instead, he was almost exclusively being painted as 'crazy', a 'mad scientist' or an 'eccentric' by the rock press, who leaned heavily on his openness regarding his mental health issues.

"Now I can look back on it much clearer," Devin sighs. "I realised that this romantic notion of putting yourself through these crazy things and abusing yourself to make crazy music, just results in your life being personally crazy and fucked up. I didn't think that was going to happen, but I suddenly became really sensitive as to how I was being perceived. These things that I had proposed of myself as – callous and sadistic and unhinged – they were just fear more than anything."

So, as Devin headed into the studio at the end of 2004, feeling burnt out from a decade spent embracing all manner of negativity through Strapping Young Lad and self-medicating himself heavily with drugs and alcohol, he did so in the knowledge that the band would very soon be coming to an end.

"I felt like I had taken that project as far as it could go," he says. "There was very little left that I thought could say in that manner. It was exhausting. The studio was crazy; I was just surrounded by lots of soft drugs and stupid people."

An album still needed to be made, though, and despite the mounting problems Devin found a way to write a record featuring a song that would, against all the odds, give him the commercial breakthrough that introduced him to a whole new fanbase.

"I BROUGHT *LOVE?* in to jam one day," Devin tells us. "We started working on it and then Jed [Simon, SYL guitarist] came up with the 'duggy-duggy-dah-duggy-duggy-dah' riff, and we arranged it so there were those two main riffs together. Then, for the chorus, it was really important to me to come up with something memorable, whether it's brutal or not. It's not from a commercial slant; I just need something to sink my teeth into."

Devin did indeed manage to come up with something memorable. Well, maybe not 'come up with', in the strictest sense of the term, but hey, a little plagiarism goes a long way.

"I really needed to get this chorus right," he laughs. "And so, the chorus on *Love?* is a direct rip-off of a song from Yes's *90125* album. There is a song on that record called *City Of Love*, which is basically the chorus to *Love?* – even the name is the same! A few months ago Machine Head did a song and a bit of it sounds kinda like *Love?* and all these kids were giving them shit about it, like, 'Oh you guys! Why did you steal from Strapping Young Lad?' Well, just so you know, I ripped off somebody first! It only seems fair that it goes the same way."

With the album, entitled *Alien*, in the bag, it was now time for a lead single to be chosen from the album, and *Love?* stood out a mile. Considering how challenging much of SYL's material up until that point had been, the song even represented something with potential crossover appeal. Not that Devin sees it that way.

THE FACTS

RELEASED:
March 2005

ALBUM:
Alien

PERSONNEL:
Devin Townsend (guitar, vocals), Jed Simon (guitar), Byron Stroud (bass), Gene Hoglan (drums)

HIGHEST CHART POSITION:
N/A

PIC CREDIT: OMER. R. CORDELL

"No!" He immediately shoots back when asked if he saw the song as a gateway to huge arenas and a lavish rockstar lifestyle. "Before that I had *Ocean Machine* and *Infinity*; there are far more songs that are 'commercial-sounding' on those records than *Love?* There seems to be this common misconception of my career that I'm trying to achieve this commercial success by writing commercial songs. The truth is that I just love Def Leppard, I just love Enya, I just loved The Eurythmics and Broadway musicals and pop. In fact, it's been much to the label's chagrin when they say, 'Oh, why don't you do that again', and I tell them that I've done it so I'm going to go and write a record about a cheeseburger."

SO, IT WAS more a happy accident than by design when *Alien* was released on the March 22, 2005 and became SYL's best-performing record commercially, peaking at No.32 on the Billboard Heatseekers Chart. Much of its success was down to its lead single.

"For the majority of my time in that band, I really wrote music to stop people paying attention to Strapping Young Lad," Devin shrugs. "And when you listen to that record, *Alien*… dude, it's a heavy, brutal, dark, angry record. Songs like *Skeksis, Shit Storm, Info Dump*… those aren't nice songs. So, it's kinda fun to have *Love?* on there and, truly, the only reason it turned out like that was because I walked into the studio one day with that chorus in my head."

"I WAS JUST SURROUNDED BY LOTS OF DRUGS AND STUPID PEOPLE"

DEVIN TOWNSEND

Another contributing factor for the song's success was its video, which took inspiration from Sam Raimi's classic 1983 video nasty *The Evil Dead*, and saw the band playing in a cabin similar to the one from the movie and being pursued by a supernatural force. It's a great, fun video, one that perfectly suits the song and, bearing in mind the link between heavy metal and horror movies, makes a great deal of sense. But, if Devin had his way…

"I have a really hard time with horror movies," he says. "I have a horrible time with sadism and guts and gore. I just don't know why people invest their time making art like that? But, weirdly, I really like *Evil Dead*, particularly the third one, *Army Of Darkness*. I thought that was great. It got proposed to do a version of that. But I hated the whole shoot. I did not get on with the director, and it all just felt a little too Los Angeles, a little too artsty and self-important. I looked around and thought, 'What am I doing here?'"

There was one moment in the video shoot that Devin does admit to enjoying, though…

"I had this absolutely horrible hair at the time," he laughs. "They hired

Fancy a Netflix horror binge, Dev?

"I HAVE A HORRIBLE TIME WITH SADISM AND GUTS AND GORE"

DEVIN TOWNSEND

these very lovely make up ladies for the shoot and at one point they came over and offered to give us all a scalp massage while we were in our make-up. I do remember thinking, 'I guess it's not all bad!' Ha ha!"

As the band went out and toured the record, Devin eventually began to come to some sort of realisation and resolution to his problems post-*Alien*. "I definitely learned everything that I needed to learn and move on with from that period," he tells us. "My behavioural patterns started to change in the aftermath."

And we even got one more Strapping Young Lad album in 2006's *The New Black* before the band did split and Devin Townsend embarked on his next set of projects. Still, *Love?* remains a song that he is rightfully proud of.

"I love it, it still sounds great to me," he nods. "Am I the same person now as I was then? No. Do I still feel the same way now as I did then? Definitely not. But I can still look back at it and see it for what it was: a snapshot of my life at that point. And in some ways, that's why every song I've ever done will always be as important to me as the latest one that I have out now. All I can tell you is, at the time, I did my best. I couldn't have done any better."

You'd think that would wrap the story up, but not quite. Before we go, Devin recounts us with a chance meeting he had with one of the men that inspired the creation of *Love?*.

"We did this prog-rock cruise a few years ago," he smiles. "And my tour manager calls me up and said, 'Jon Anderson [former Yes frontman] wants to meet you.' I was like, 'Holy Shit!' I was just thrilled. We set up this dinner, and my friends are there, I'm telling them that one of our heroes wants to meet me, he walks in, my tour manager says, 'Jon, this is Devin' and Jon Anderson goes, 'Who is this guy? That's not the guy I wanted to meet!' Turns out he wanted to meet Anathema! I busted his ball for that, but, to be fair to him, he stayed and chatted with us until Anathema came down. It was actually a really fun, funny experience."

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29th	BRIGHTON – Old Market

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Bloodbath

Autopsy

Mysticum

HELLRIPPER
22/10 LONDON - The Black Heart
23/10 LEEDS - Boom
24/10 GLASGOW - The Garage

MORK with Winterfylleth
22/05 LONDON Boston Music Room
23/05 MANCHESTER Rebellion Club

BLOODBATH
09/05 LONDON Incineration Fest
Electric Ballroom

AUTOPSY
22/23/08 LONDON
Deathfest Electric Ballroom

MYSTICUM
3/4/10 LONDON Cosmic Void Festival
Electric Ballroom

"absolutely killer"
9/10 METAL HAMMER

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Chants From Another Place

Debut solo album from the darkly enigmatic Swedish Grammy-winning songwriter and

Tribulation

guitarist Jonathan Hultén

OUT NOW on CD / gatefold LP / DL

Nightwish: record breakers

YOUR SHOUT

THERE ARE TOO MANY FESTIVALS

And other complaints, celebrations and curious musings you guys sent our way this month

WISHMASTERS

As a fan, I love that Nightwish are doing a double album now. Although I hope it's better than 99% of double albums by metal or rock bands. Can anyone name many good ones? I bet you can't!
Domini Goodman (email)

We reckon Iron Maiden had a pretty damn good stab at it with *The Book Of Souls*. We also back *Use Your Illusion 1* and 2 if they count. If you wanna go back far enough, *Physical Graffiti* by some band called Led Zeppelin did pretty OK too. That's about it, though.

FLOOR ENSEMBLE

With your recent cover, surely Floor has now set the record for most *Metal Hammer* cover appearances for a Nightwish singer? I remember Anette getting one or two, did Tarja get one? I need the facts!
Karen Cearny (email)

You're quite right, our Karen: Floor is indeed a record-breaking Nightwish superstar, with three covers and counting. With the band's rise showing no signs of stalling, we can't say we're much surprised.

NIFTY FIFTIES

As a reader who actually remembers picking up the first Black Sabbath record when it came out, let me say how great it is to see what they started still being in such good health! Metal forever! From a 67-year-old and still loving it metalhead!
Tudor Vernon (email)

Hats off to you, sir! We can't quite believe it's been five decades since Black Sabbath heralded the arrival of heavy metal either. It's done alright since then, hasn't it?

YOUTH GONE WILD

People saying rock is dead or that metal isn't producing new stars: let me introduce you to Loathe, Code Orange, Conjurer, Employed To Serve, Venom Prison and Power Trip! These bands all kill! It's time to give them a chance!
Harry Whigfield (Facebook)

We agree! It's why we've had features on every single one of those bands in recent months, and why we'll continue to do so. Heavy music is alive and well!

GLOBAL METAL

Really enjoyed the 'on location' pieces in last month's issue – Nightwish in Lapland, Ihsahn in Norway and Sepultura in France! Can we have more of that please – it's way more interesting to see bands outside of the UK bubble.
One Happy Traveller (email)

Banging idea. If anyone fancies taking some journalists to Hawaii to hang with some metal bands for a feature, we're officially putting our names in the hat. Just putting that out there.

UNITED STATES OF AMERIKA

Finally! I don't know why it's taken so long for Rammstein to come back to America (Amerika?!) but

#TWEETS

Really excited for @Slipknot on Wednesday! Broke my heart when I told my 6yo she couldn't come see the "guys in masks".
@saffa_mat

I wanted to talk to Steve Harris when I met him but my mouth just didn't work. I just stood there looking like my brain had just fallen out of my ear.
@MogOneill

Are Evanescence still a thing? Assumed they had that one-hit wonder and would do one!
@Cunningham_UK

Parkway Drive's last record was damn near a carbon copy of Machine Head's *Catharsis*. Just worse.
@atrocity213

Damn, that Ziltoid looks pretty omniscient.
@Davetron2112

NIGHTWISH: JOHN McMURTRIE

Rammstein: pledging allegiance to their US fans

it's about fuckin' time. Los Angeles here I come, baby!
Jerry Ambrose (Facebook)

Hey, while we're on the subject of going places with bands, anyone fancy giving us a lift to one of Rammstein's North American shows? Anyone? Come on…

MOANERS = SHIT

Social media is a joke. Full of people complaining about having to go to Milton Keynes for Knotfest or the My Chemical Romance reunion show. I'm not even an MCR fan but really?! The one time a band does a big show outside of London – and it's only *half an hour away* – and you're moaning about having to travel? Ridiculous.
Ant Perowne (Facebook)

Yeah, if you think travelling to Milton Keynes is bad, check out the miles people in other countries will put in to get to a gig. Ever travelled across Texas? That shit's *big*.

TAPE AIDING

Vinyl is having another moment in the sun it seems – how about a return of the mighty cassette? Tape-trading was the best part of the 80s and 90s and I think it helped to bring metal communities together. Who's with me? Start the tape revolution!
Brian Mayers (Facebook)

There's some stuff we definitely liked about tapes (portability, trading, trying to catch songs off the radio before the DJ cuts in), but there's also a lot we're happy to leave in the past (less artwork to ogle over, warping, the film inside going doollaly and coming out and oh god it's everywhere oh god oh god oh g–)

FESTI-FULL

I don't want to whine but I'm starting to feel like we're reaching saturation point with festivals and big gigs in summer now. If you're a fan of rock music, this year you're going to have to choose between Download, Bloodstock, Arctangent, 2000Trees, Knotfest, Rammstein, Guns N' Roses, My Chemical Romance… no one can afford all that!
Stuart Rowers (Facebook)

Is anyone out there managing to tick off all those gigs this summer? Get in contact so we can high five you (and ask to borrow some money).

THE BIG DEBATE

Hammer writer Stephen Hill touched hearts (and nerves) when he penned an ode the 90s metal culture icons Beavis and Butthead. Here's what you had to say about it. Uuuu-huh-huh…

HE SAID

"In the 90s two very different voices were arguably the most influential of an entire generation. With a simple 'This sucks' or 'This rules', Mike Judge's creation of two dunderheaded high school kids could tear down careers or give much-needed cool points to underground acts that would never usually be seen on primetime MTV. And, thankfully for us, Beavis and Butthead loved metal."

YOU SAY

I wouldn't call them an "authority" – definitely influential. If they didn't make fun of Death and Chuck, I'd agree with authority. Still love them!
Liam Lynch (Facebook)

If it wasn't for this cartoon I wouldn't have discovered Kyuss! It was the only way for us Brits to hear any metal, especially if you didn't have MTV in the 90s.
Will Sheakespeare (Facebook)

Have bought a lot of stuff those guys brought up! White Zombie, Ministry, Nudeswirl, Danzig, Georgia Satellites and many others!
Patrick Aggenbach (Facebook)

I feel bad for younger generations who didn't grow up with that show. It was pure comedic brilliance.
Cole Hall (Facebook)

Best TV show ever. The only problem I had is that B&BH were supposed to be metalheads, yet would constantly bad-mouth bands you'd think they'd like.
Bryan Ribelin (Facebook)

JOIN THE BIG DEBATE AT FACEBOOK.COM/METALHAMMERREADERS

HAMMER STEREO

What's been blowing our office speakers

TRIVIUM
What The Dead Men Say
"The album we've been waiting for. Fuck yes, lads"
MERLIN ALDERSLADE
EDITOR

JONATHAN HULTÉN
Chants From Another Place
"This is beautiful and I am in love with it"
ELEANOR GOODMAN
DEPUTY EDITOR

ORANSSI PAZUZU
MESTARIN KYNSI
"Makes the stargate in *2001: A Space Odyssey* feel like a traffic jam on the M25"
JONATHAN SELZER
REVIEWS EDITOR

LOATHE
I Let It In And It Took Everything
"Love it more with every listen"
VANESSA THORPE
PRODUCTION EDITOR

LUCIFER
Lucifer
"Another flawless mix of macabre lyrics and catchy retro rock from songwriting siren Johanna Sadonis"
ALICE PATTILLO
ONLINE EDITOR

TRIVIUM
What The Dead Men Say
"All the riffs!"
LOUISE BROCK
ART EDITOR

RAMMSTEIN: PRESS/JENS KOCH

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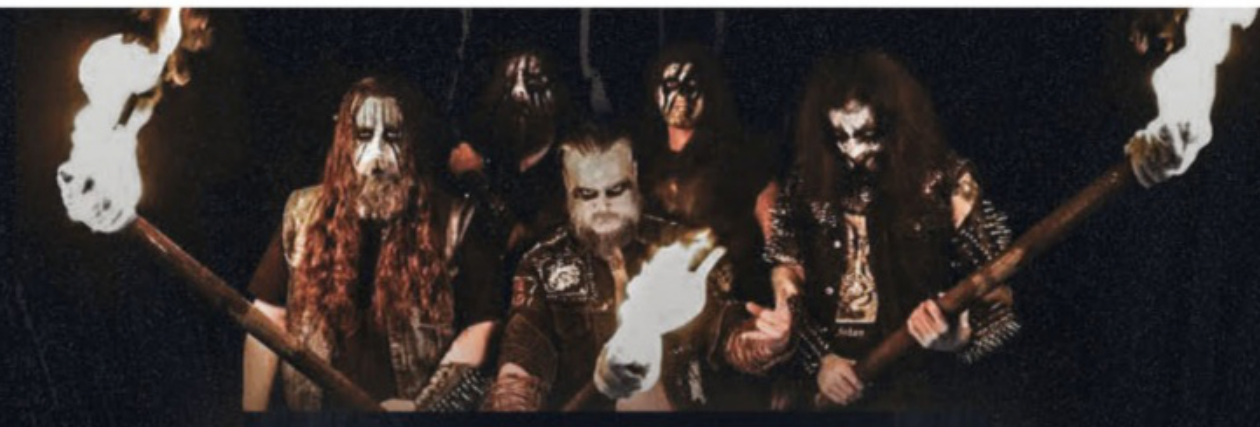

SICARIUS

GOD OF DEAD ROOTS

BLACK METAL NIHILISTS DELIVER SONIC HELLFIRE AND BRIMSTONE ON THEIR NEW ALBUM, GOD OF DEAD ROOTS!

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(*BEHEMOTH, DISMEMBER, ASPHYX*)

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NEW NOISE

JONATHAN HULTÉN

Tribulation's talismanic guitarist is going it alone – and the results may just surprise you

WORDS: JOE DALY

FOLLOWING UP HIS mesmerising 2017 EP, *The Dark Night Of The Soul*, Tribulation guitarist Jonathan Hultén returns with his full-length solo debut, *Chants From Another Place*. An utterly transfixing voyage through dreamy acoustic landscapes, *Chants...* sees the Grammy-winning Swede step broadly away from the punishing frays of black and death metal into something far more introspective. Rooted in the old folk and religious choral traditions, the 12 compositions articulate Jonathan's artistic and spiritual evolution, beginning many years ago. "My mother used to be a choir leader," he explains. "She sang in a choir and played in churches, in concerts and whatnot. Basically, for a while, I was also a church musician. She's always played those songs at home."

Breathtakingly fragile, tracks like *A Dance In The Road, Deep Night* and *The Mountain* tap into a vibrant cosmic realm, pitched just beyond the five senses. Summoning nature as his muse, these songs build a powerful psychic bridge into that otherworldly state of being. "It feels like there's something mystical about it that's drawing me in," he says. "And I imbue nature with that feeling, as if it was nature that inspired those songs, once upon a time. That's what the album's about as well. In the end, the pictures that appeared to my inner eye were all about trees and mountains and the sea."

With the exception of drums on one song, Jonathan composed and performed the entire album himself. Yet *Chants...* is anything but one of those stodgy and self-indulgent singer/songwriter affairs; rather, these tracks ebb and flow with lush, spectral harmonies and delicate fingerstyle melodies that recall the baroque British folk tradition of the late-60s, sprinkled with delicate flecks of dreampop.

Thematically, silvery metaphors of death, rebirth and the cycle of life invest the album with a real sense of heaviness that permeates every note. "This current society isn't staring into the face of death at all. Ha ha!" he says. "It seems as if we're more obsessed with staying as young as possible. I guess that's the opposite of embracing ageing and by extension, embracing death. The eras of a person's life – the milestones, or the major events that determine where you're going – are saying goodbye to an old way of being. Let's say you're not in school anymore and you're about to enter the world of being an adult. Or you are turning 30, for example, or maybe you're starting a new job or you're moving somewhere else. It's all about entering something new and saying goodbye to the old. It can have a very profound effect on our lives."

Chants... is ultimately an affirmative collection of meditations that find hope in the idea of impermanence. "Change is actually quite vitalising and energising if you can accept it, but it can be very uncomfortable sometimes. And scary."

THE CONTRAST BETWEEN his solo compositions and his work in Tribulation is dramatic, and yet Jonathan believes that the two forms inhabit a symbiotic relationship. "I've noticed that they tend to borrow things from each other, these personas that I explore within myself. It just comes naturally. When I explore this way of performing, like certain hand movements, they start coming into the Tribulation performance quite naturally. So the line is blurry. The Tribulation thing has been going on for a long time; like 10 years, I guess. But [my solo work] is just two or three years old, so we'll see where that ends. It could end up in a really strange or wacky place. I don't know. Let's hope so! Ha ha ha!"

IN SHORT

SOUNDS LIKE:
Pillowy acoustic dreamscapes for strolling through an ancient forest

FOR FANS OF:
Baroness, Nic Nassuet, Jeff Buckley

LISTEN TO:
Where Devils Weep

PRESS/SOILE SIIRTOLA

Naturally, Tribulation fans will be among the first to check out his solo album and asked how they might respond, Jonathan only hazards a guess. "I really don't know what they'll think. It depends if they're fans of the earlier stuff or fans of Tribulation's latest stuff, because it's quite different. I guess you would not appreciate *Chants…* as much if you weren't into goth rock or if you were strictly a metal-oriented person. The jump from goth rock to Nick Drake is at least smaller than [2009 Tribulation debut] *The Horror*'s death metal to Nick Drake."

It will help, he suggests, to listen to *Chants…* on a long, unhurried walk outdoors. "That's the way to listen to music, really," he says. "To be in nature and to get that sort of synesthesia of music marrying into something extremely powerful, visually, along with the other senses as well — smells, wind in your face and a sense of freedom in being one with nature."

Such emotive and compelling songwriting will surely find much acclaim among both critics and fans, but regardless of opinion, Jonathan has drawn deep satisfaction from the process. "I didn't exactly know which way it was going to take me," he explains. "I had been wanting to do an album like this for over 10 years or more, even before I started singing and picking up a guitar, I knew that this was something that I would want to do in the future. It's a longtime dream and that it would turn out exactly like this? I guess I had a hunch, but here we are and I guess it's something I couldn't have predicted when I was 20. But right now it feels like it came out the way it should have. What I've accomplished is that I've realised a really old dream of mine."

"THIS COULD END UP IN A REALLY WACKY PLACE"

For now, Jonathan will be touring his album throughout March and April, supporting Chelsea Wolfe. After that, nothing is currently booked, but the guitarist promises that *Chants…* is only the beginning. "There will definitely be more," he says. "I actually can't wait to start with the new stuff! Ha ha ha!"

***CHANTS FROM ANOTHER PLACE* IS OUT NOW VIA KSCOPE**

NEW NOISE

GIVER

Care about the world? Fucking talk about it

WORDS: STEPHEN HILL

BOTH PUNK ROCK and heavy metal have always been politically motivated forms of music and, with the upheaval and enormous division across the globe at the moment, it feels like there has never been a more pertinent time for bands to speak up. German metallic punks Giver are doing their very best to uphold those traditions.

"Our band and our platform have been created for us to stand for certain values," says bassist Christopher Schmidt. "I truly believe that, in the current climate of the world, if you aren't speaking about issues that you wish to change, you're doing a disservice to yourself. Why are you even here?"

The band's new album, *Sculpture Of Violence*, is both a brilliantly visceral and devastating set of old-school metallic hardcore ragers, and a deep look into humanity's seemingly never-ending obsession with violence.

"It's basically posing the question of whether or not man can ever exist without war and destruction," Christopher tells us. "We are constantly working to make the world a better place, speaking up for inclusivity and the betterment of the environment, but the system is so skewed against us…"

"It's a system that relies on dividing people," vocalist Robert Anderson says, picking up the thread. "We've started to wonder recently if this hallowed idea of world peace is ever truly achievable."

Regardless of the obstacles in front of them, Giver are staunchly focused on going about their business with the goal to affect as many people as they can, and surround themselves with an infrastructure that means they don't have to compromise their ideals.

"The idea of commercial gain isn't something that I ever give any thought to," Christopher nods, while Robert shakes his head at the very idea. "Most of us are from the underground, DIY hardcore scene, Robert is much more of a 'metal guy', and we are more interested in creating shows and spaces for people that make them feel accepted for who they are. For giving those people that feel like they have no place, somewhere where they can belong whatever their persuasion. That's more important to me."

If you long for scabrous riffs married with a genuine social conscience, Giver are here for you – whoever you are.

IN SHORT

SOUNDS LIKE:
Riff-heavy metallic hardcore with a conscience

FOR FANS OF:
Modern Life Is War, American Nightmare, Renounced

LISTEN TO:
The Same Stream

***SCULPTURE OF VIOLENCE* IS OUT NOW VIA HOLY ROAR**

BLACK PYRE

Wales are taking up the gauntlet of black metal. Sorry Norway…

WORDS: NAOMI SANDERS

WALES IS KNOWN for a lot of things: sheep, rolling hills, rugby, that awesome flag and, of course, a vibrant metal scene. They've had bands like Bullet For My Valentine and Skindred as their flag bearers, but how about something completely different?

"Black Pyre are about creating a sonic melting pot of black metal, and about being dark and frosty," says vocalist Asbjorn Daemonium de Noctis. And yes, that's his name of choice. "We try not to take ourselves too seriously – we like to incorporate some tongue-in-cheek humour, but that doesn't mean we lack professionalism. Of course, I must confess we are all definitely 100% real dark sorcerer warlocks."

Even though the band currently only have one EP, released in 2019, the quartet, completed by drummer Dominus de Octopus, guitarist Olthigor Doombeard and bassist Kjøttflate the Mighty Ravendo, have garnered a lot of attention with not only their music, but also their entertaining live shows – they managed to reach the semi-finals of Bloodstock's Metal 2 The Masses competition in South Wales in their first year competing. As they continue to tour, including another slot in Metal 2 The Masses 2020, the band are also planning their debut album, with Asbjorn stating "We've been very inspired by a number of bands recently and we hope our newer music reflects that. I think our newer material is really quite special and even more adventurous than our EP, with plenty of moments that will want to make you clutch a grapefruit in the air!" What's more metal than clutching grapefruits, after all?

IN SHORT

SOUNDS LIKE:
Black metal performed by a young, angry dragon

FOR FANS OF:
Rotting Christ, Behemoth, Mayhem

LISTEN TO:
Tenebrous Obituary

***THE FORBIDDEN TOMES* EP IS OUT NOW**

GIVER:PRESS/MARIE LAFORGE. BLACK PYRE: PRESS.

CONTROVERSIAL

German quintet making extreme music with extreme emotions

WORDS: SOPHIE MORGAN

IN SHORT

SOUNDS LIKE:
An emotional maelstrom of unflinching tech-death with a subtle dash of symphonic BM

FOR FANS OF:
Whitechapel, The Black Dahlia Murder, Dismember

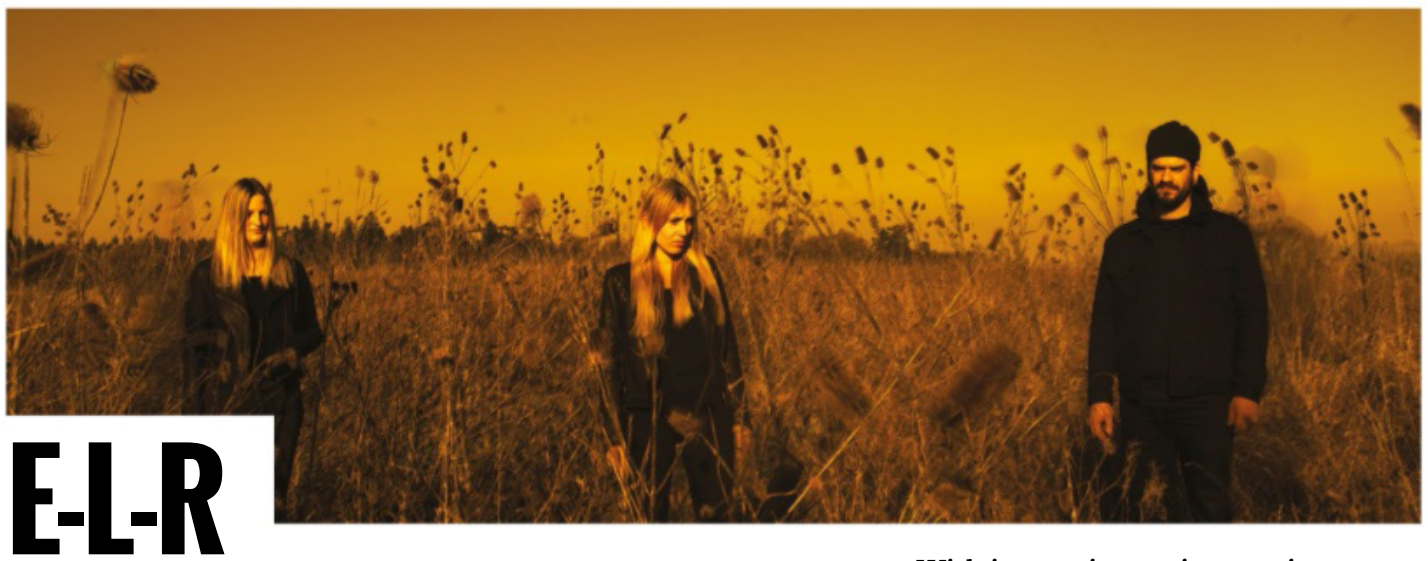
LISTEN TO:
Revelation

"I DON'T THINK we *have* to speak about these issues, but for me there were a lot of personal reasons to do so," divulges Controversial frontman Jonas Langhammer. "I'd seen a lot of documentaries about the Church – with many of them doing highly questionable things. It's not about faith itself – *everyone* should be allowed to believe in whatever they want. But we've reached a point in humanity where we do need to address what's going on. And these tracks highlight those issues."

Taking lyrical aim at societal ills like religious manipulation, suppression of freedom and poverty via intricately woven narratives, Controversial are the epitome of that in-your-face moniker. Sophomore album *Revelation* – which sounds like the spawn of The Black Dahlia Murder and early Whitechapel conceived while listening to Sweden's Dismember – marries bowel-trembling gutturals and tech-death blasts with virtuosic soloing for an album that, in the eyes of the vocalist, was more akin to a personal journey. Or, dare we say, an emotional catharsis?

"That's very fitting as we'd planned on calling the album that, but Machine Head beat us to it!" laughs guitarist Emil Richters. "Extreme music needs some emotion for balance and to engage people," ponders Jonas. "When it comes to music, I need something I can really relate to." And with first single *Tales Of A Shattered Youth*'s haunted exploration of traumas past, there's plenty for listeners to find solace in. On *Revelation*, Controversial transform hidden turmoil into a recipe for continued success.

***REVELATION* IS OUT NOW**



E-L-R

Arcane post-metallers are here to kick down the doors of perception

WORDS: ALEX DELLER

IN SHORT

SOUNDS LIKE:
Huge hymnal soundscapes carved from surging, FX-laden thrum

FOR FANS OF:
Amenra, Spotlights, Oranssi Pazuzu

LISTEN TO:
Ambrosia

SWISS TRIO E-L-R occupy a dreamlike realm that mixes crushing gloom with transformative beauty, so it's unsurprising when singer/guitarist S.M. outlines influences that range from esoteric art and literature to the natural world. "We share a fascination for the space between the lines – the things that you can't see or are hard to put into words," she says. "We're drawn to ancient myths, natural forces, reveries, hedonism, feelings. We have a strong attachment to nature and its energy, probably also because we live in Switzerland and are surrounded by majestic mountains, deep forests and clean lakes."

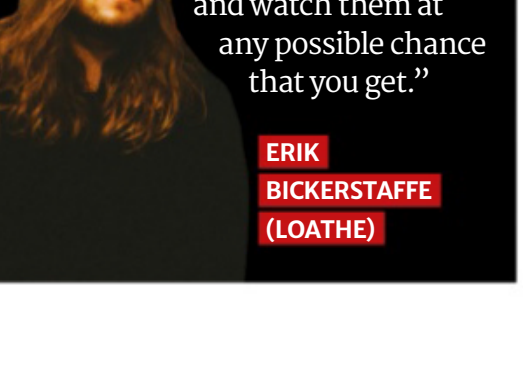
With its persistent, immersive thrum, debut album *Mænad* possesses a strangely ritualistic quality – fitting, perhaps, for an endeavour named after the hedonistic followers of Greek god Dionysus. S.M., however, views things differently. "We wouldn't define it as a 'ritual' – more like being roused from a burning kiss," she says. "Our focus is getting lost in our rehearsal sessions and weaving panoramic soundscapes."

Despite this talk of getting lost, the band sound remarkably sure-footed and purposeful, but S.M. explains the band are definitely still learning. "Last year taught us a lot and we were thrown into cold water countless times," she says. "But our bond gets stronger, and we're eager to explore the unknown sides of this pact."

***MÆNAD* IS OUT NOW VIA PROPHECY PRODUCTIONS**

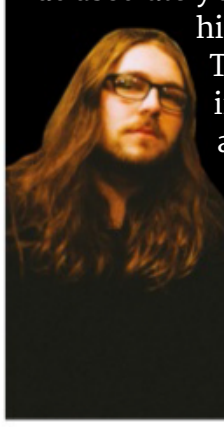
IN THE KNOW

What your favourite bands are listening to



GOD COMPLEX

"THEY ARE THE UK's answer to what heavy music and what hardcore music needs and wants right now. I think that every vocalist right now should be looking at Harry, because he has every voice under the sun, and can do absolutely anything that he puts his mind to vocally. Their live show is insane. You should go and watch them at any possible chance that you get."



ERIK BICKERSTAFFE (LOATHE)

CONTROVERSIAL: PRESS/SASCHASCHROEDER. E-L-R: PRESS.

HOARD ALMIGHTY

Box sets, underground oddities and all the essential merch you need this month

AYREON
INTO THE ELECTRIC CASTLE LIVE AND OTHER TALES: WOODEN BOX

MASCOT

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POLARISING THEY MAY be, but Dutch prog rockers Ayreon have never lacked for ambition, case in point being 1998's gargantuan space opera concept album, *Into The Electric Castle*. Part deadly *Crystal Maze*, part human origin story, it drew in luminaries such as Sharon den Adel, Anneke van Giersbergen, and ex-Marillion singer Fish to voice the various, questing characters – the latter two reappearing for the 20th anniversary show in Tilburg. For the sturdy of hearing, the whole event is being released, most spectacularly, in the form of this limited-to-1,500 box set. Prise open its thick, handled wooden gates and within you'll find the album on three red/gold splatter vinyl discs, housed in a trifold, gold-foiled sleeve; another vinyl picture disc featuring rehearsals and actor John De Lancie's narration; a 44-page 'Earbook' with two CDs, two DVDs and Blu-ray; poster; set of 10 postcards; and signed certificate of authenticity. A holy grail for true prog and power metal crusaders!

http://tinyurl.com/ayreon-box

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If you fancy yourself a bit of a dancefloor diva then what says 'snake hips' better than a pair of kecks with snakes slithering up to your hips? Also note the rather cool (if somewhat inconvenient) skull buttons above the ankles.

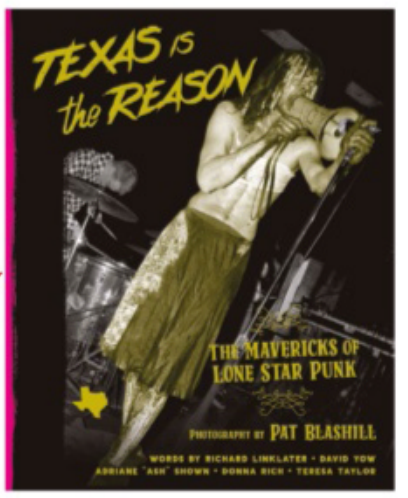
https://tinyurl.com/serpent-hips

MINECRAFT FRIDGE MAGNETS

£9.99

If you've never understood why baddies keep breaking into your house on *Minecraft* (something to do with where you place the torches, right?), fear not. Pull a Machiavellian power move and bring the fight to the fridge.

http://tinyurl.com/minecraft-magnets



TEXAS IS THE REASON

£29.99

This lavish tome from Bazillion Points digs into the 80s Texas hardcore scene, with 200-plus photos of saucily named legends like The Dicks, Big Boys and Butthole Surfers, plus essays from David Yow and Richard Linklater.

http://tinyurl.com/texas-reason

HARRY POTTER WAND SHOP

£89.99

Why choose one wand when you can buy the whole damn shop? This 20cm Ollivanders replica is perfect for the mantlepiece, and will look perfect next to the urn containing fair Dobby's ashes.

http://tinyurl.com/potter-shop

VHS VIDEO COVER ART

£33.99

Remember VHS for its positives rather than shite quality. Thomas Hodge's uber-retro curio collection comprises over 240 retina-slicing, nostalgia-inducing video sleeves from an age where visually enhancing your lumpen assets was a prerequisite for any budding thespian.

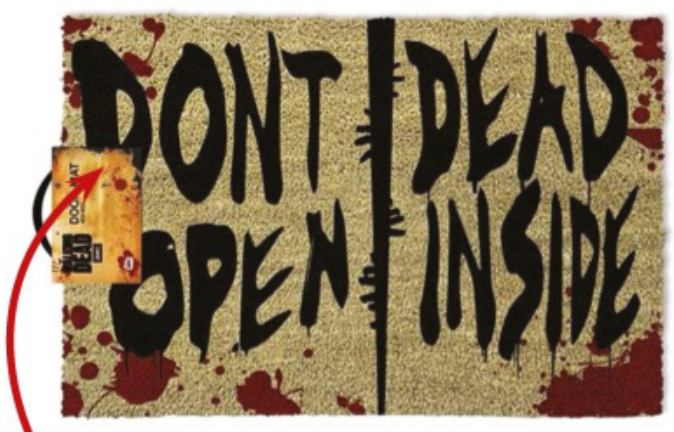
http://tinyurl.com/vhs-art

BACK TO THE FUTURE VHS NOTEBOOK

£14.99

Speaking of odes to the humble VHS… Great Scott! Hoverboards! Getting off with your mum! Wait, what? Celebrate one of the 20th century's greatest films with this themed notebook, replete with 80s-style sticker pack and nifty retro sleeve.

http://tinyurl.com/future-notebook



THE WALKING DEAD DOORMAT

£14.80

"Don't open. Dead inside" – an adage to live by. Dump it outside your toilet on Wetherspoon's curry night; pop it on your dating profile. The possibilities are… well, that's it. Or put it outside your door.

http://tinyurl.com/dead-doormat

THE GHASTLY ONE

£75

Enter the gritty, grimy world of Andy Milligan – unsung king of cinematic sleaze. This special edition of Jimmy McDonough's feted book comes numbered, signed and with a collection of unpublished scripts.

http://tinyurl.com/ghastly-one

CODE ORANGE T-SHIRT

£14.99

While Code Orange choke the world with their suffocating delivery of industrial hardcore, their merch deserves an honourable mention. Just *look* at it. Type O Negative levels of typography there. New album's a banger, too.

http://tinyurl.com/codeo-negateev

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“PEOPLE EXPECT ME TO BE INVINCIBLE. IT’S A LOT OF PRESSURE!”

Fans were stunned when Dave Mustaine was diagnosed with cancer. In a world-exclusive interview, we find out how the Megadeth frontman took on his biggest battle yet – and won

WORDS: JAMIE BLAINE • PICTURES: JEREMY SAFFER

Dave Mustaine:
keeping the faith

The whole world is coming apart at the seams.

At least that's the way it seems in Nashville, Tennessee this week. A T6 tornado tore the hell out of town just as the coronavirus hit the Volunteer State. Even President Trump is in Music City today, surveying the damage from Marine Helicopter One, hovering above us as we step into a dark, downtown studio to meet with local resident, Dave Mustaine.

The Apocalypse's first and second horsemen take a back seat, at least for the moment. Right now, we're more concerned about Dave's dog. Oblivious to its diminutive size, the long-haired Chihuahua descends upon us like some high-pitched Hound of Hell, menacingly baring his teeth and threatening to devour our very soul if we step any closer to his master.

"Easy, Romeo. Easy," Dave says, reaching to save us from the snarling beast. We coil back, cautiously offering the back of our hand. Dave laughs gruffly. "Oh, no," he says. "That doesn't work with him."

As the Megadeth frontman corrals his pup, it gives us a chance to check out the legend after his recent health crisis. Mass of fiery mane – intact. Black jacket, jeans, black t-shirt, white sneakers. Honestly? Well, he looks like Dave Mustaine, like the hellraiser still not sold on cheap or easy peace. He moves a bit slow, but not creakily – more like a man who's fought the Devil bare-fisted and lived to tell the tale.

"THEY HIT THAT CANCER HARD. IT BEAT THE HELL OUTTA ME"

DAVE MUSTAINE

With the hound at bay, he turns to greet us. It's difficult to know what's appropriate in this season of paranoia and mutant pandemic, especially for a man who's just had his immune system nuked. Do we fist bump? Nod and touch elbows? "Nah, I ain't worried, man," Dave assures us, shaking hands with a vice grip. "I'm healthy now."

The backstory: March 2019. After being bounced from doctor to doctor, Dave gets an official diagnosis that sounds like some dystopian speed metal verse. *Squamous cell carcinoma on the base of your tongue.*

Hold up. Cancer? Mustaine? *No way.*

If anyone seemed indestructible, it was Dave Mustaine. Bad ass, bad attitude, snarling, spitting, raging, red-headed, black belt-carrying soldier in God's Army, Godfather Of Thrash. That cancer could sink its claws into someone like Dave sent shockwaves through the metal community. Now, one year after the diagnosis, *Metal Hammer* comes to Music City to hear his testimony first-hand. Because Dave Mustaine kicked cancer's ass.

"Yeah, I'm pretty stoked about that," he says, grinning as he grabs a bottle of water and motions for us to have a seat in a private, black-walled dressing room. The obvious first question: *So, how do you feel?* "I'm a little run down, but a lot of that's from the medication and all the stuff that goes along with treatment. They hit the cancer really hard, nine doses of chemo and 51 radiation treatments, which just beats the hell out of you. My mouth is still messed up but overall, I feel really good."

Dave settles in on the couch to tell us how he got the news that he was cancer-free. "I was here in Nashville, at my doctor's office. He had to reach down the back of my throat, which was really unpleasant, but it was important for him to feel and make sure. And he said my progress was amazing, that both sides felt the same. I've got a metal plate in my neck that I figured might cause problems, but the doc told me, "Dave, you are in perfect health, 100%. You're free to go."

Dave pauses to slide a piece of Big Red gum into his mouth, twisting the foil between his fingers, reflecting before he continues. "It sounds bizarre, but I kind of knew. I took good care of myself. I'd done everything my doctors told me to do. I had tons of support from family and friends. And I had lots of prayer. I don't want to sound arrogant, but I expected it. I had faith that I was going to be healed."

At this point, Dave rewinds to early 2019, explaining how he received the grim verdict. While out shredding with Joe Satriani and Zakk Wylde on the Experience Hendrix tour, severe mouth pain struck. "I'd gone in to get some dental work," he says. "And after, it felt like the dentist had broken a piece of scraper off in my gums. I went back and he sent me to an oral surgeon who checked me out and said, 'You need to see an ear, nose and throat doctor. I don't want to say anything bad, but it looks like the Big C.' Well, fuck, dude! Why'd you say *that*, then?"

Dave shakes his head, still pissed, taking a long pull of water. "Anyway, I figured I'd take care of myself once the Hendrix tour was over. While out on the road, a friend of mine knew an ENT at the local emergency room. He came over, took a look, and said it wasn't anything to worry about. But I knew something was wrong with me. It was just too far down for anybody to see. We had a day off and I was home in Nashville, so I saw a local specialist who suggested a scope. I don't do good with scopes, so they had to knock me out to get the tube in. But yeah, they confirmed that it was cancer in the side of my throat that had spread to two lymph nodes. Initially, they wanted to send me to MD Anderson in Houston for 11 weeks and I said *no. fucking. way.* I'm not gonna be away from my family for that long. So, they set me up at Vanderbilt, with Dr. Cmelak, who's actually one of the best radiation oncologists in the country. I had a good team."

Fortunately for Mustaine, Music City is also the healthcare capital of the United States.

The band cancelled tour dates and put the brakes on a new record so Dave could begin a brutal treatment regime, resting at his farm in the rolling hills of nearby Franklin between blasts of radiation and IV chemo drips. The worst, he says, is over. "I'll have to do another MRI soon and check in with the doctor regularly, three years, five years. But the cool thing is, my voice came back even better than before. I think the treatment shrunk whatever was on my vocal cord that was making it hard to sing. I'd seen pictures of my voice box and there was some kind of bubble on the flap that was giving me trouble. Cyst, tumour, nodule, whatever the fuck it was. But that's gone now, and they say long as I don't do anything stupid, I should be good for the rest of my career. I know once you get cancer you're never really out of the woods, but if the process doesn't scare you into changing your lifestyle, then shame on you."

Dave is no stranger to injuries and pain. He suffered career-threatening nerve damage to his left arm during a 2002 stint in a Texas rehab, and a decade later, underwent emergency surgery for spinal stenosis – whiplash, if you will – resulting in titanium implants in his neck. Flashing his trademark maniacal smile, Dave insists he felt no fear in the face of death.

"I already died once," he says, referencing his 1993 overdose on Valium. "I don't remember anything, though. No light or tunnel or any of that shit. I respect death but I'm not living my life in fear. There was a little when I first found out that I had cancer, but it wasn't so much about dying, as not being able to use my gift anymore, to play guitar or sing. That really shook me. To be inconvenienced is one thing. It's something else to lose your gift."

Dave leans in. His steely glare, coupled with the white beard and wild hair, gives him the appearance of some Old Testament prophet of doom. "When they told me that my arm was 80% and I would never play guitar again, I thought, 'You have no idea who you're talking to. I will absolutely play again, and it'll be a matter of days, not weeks.' There's a couple things I still can't do, but I feel like I can play almost as good as I used to. Going through that thing with my arm was helpful. It gave me the courage to face any kind of medical problem I might have down the road. I'm going to do everything they say and if there's blood, I can handle it. I've seen my own blood before."

We ask about the darkest days, if his reputation causes people to expect an unrealistic level of strength. Dave fidgets with his shoelace. Ruffles the pup sweetly. Reaches for another piece of gum before the reply. "I think people do expect me to be invincible. It is a lot of pressure," he admits. "But when you come out on the other side victorious, they cheer even louder. I like being a man of the people. That might sound corny, but it's true. The hardest part was having to let others take care of me. I've always been so independent that even if I *do* need help, I'm not going to let anyone know. But overall, chemo wasn't as ugly for me as it is for a lot of people. I had a couple of days where I got really sick and threw up, but that was it. I tried to be upbeat. When I would go in for treatment, I'd talk with the other patients, try to be encouraging."

The thrash titan was forced to miss the band's inaugural MegaCruise in October, with his daughter, Electra, stepping in to represent the family. Upon completion of treatment, Dave was able to return for the Killing Road tour with Five Finger Death Punch in January. While on stage at the SSE Arena in Wembley, he announced that the cancer was in complete remission.

"Actually, I think I mentioned it from the first show of the tour," says Dave. "If not Helsinki, then Stockholm for sure. I wanted the fans to know that I'm OK and how great the crew has been. And for sure, I want to tell the truth and let everyone know how much I prayed through this whole ordeal. Not just like, 'Oh, yeah, thanks, God.' But that I really, seriously prayed."

A Christian for nearly two decades, Dave has always been vocal about his beliefs. While discussing the role faith played in his recovery, he pauses, raking fingers through his beard, measuring his words. "After growing up as a Jehovah's Witness, there was a time that I hated the concept of anything that I had to answer to. The church disfellowshipped my sister, Debbie, and I was the only one who would sit and listen to her cry. It flipped me out and all I wanted to do was get back at the people who hurt my sister," Dave explains. "But now, I try to keep my prayers pretty gentle. I don't pray for anyone to get hurt or get what's coming to them, only for God's will and that he would help me do what I need to do. To me, prayer is just an open, honest, easy conversation like you're talking to your dad. Essentially, that's what God is supposed to be, our Father, right? So that makes it easy for me to engage in prayer."

Asked to elaborate, Dave adds, "In the Bible, the Pharisees liked to pray in public so everybody could see them. They thought the louder they prayed, the more pious they would seem, like it's an indication of their righteousness. For me, righteousness is something that's exhibited through consistent behaviour that's Godly in nature. You sum up the gospels with the Golden Rule. Helping others, no matter what. There's this old song by the Circle Jerks called *Wonderful*." Dave sings the chorus of the 80s punk classic. Romeo perks up, cocking an ear in his master's

"MY VOICE CAME BACK EVEN BETTER"

DAVE MUSTAINE

Dave has a little message for cancer...

DAVE MUSTAINE

One of the founding fathers of thrash... loves his Chihuahua and cereal with marshmallows

Megadeth (left to right): Dirk Verbeuren, David Ellefson, Dave Mustaine, Kiko Loureiro

direction. "It's a great song that talks about how it's really not so hard to do something nice for someone else. Help a stranger. Smile. If you see a homeless person, give them something to eat. I was homeless once. It was the worst, man. Scrounging for food, living in [bassist] David Ellefson's van…"

Dave apologises for losing his train of thought, blaming the lingering effects of "chemo brain". After a break, he switches gears, discussing the positive changes that have come from his battle with the disease.

"I WANTED TO GET BACK AT THE PEOPLE WHO HURT MY SISTER"

DAVE MUSTAINE

"My wife and I are getting along tremendously, and things are really good with my son and daughter right now, too. I've got a better relationship with my band. The other day, Kiko [Loureiro, guitarist] says to me, 'I really like this new Dave!' What he was talking about, is when you're dealing with pain, you drink, you smoke, you bitch, because you don't know what's going on. But soon as I found out what was wrong with me, I attacked it. Once I did, I could feel myself getting happier too.

Support also came from outside Dave's immediate circle. His old band brother, James Hetfield, reached out, as did KISS's Paul Stanley and Ozzy, who was at war with his own medical demons in 2019.

"Everybody's treatment is different, but Bruce Dickinson had been through throat cancer about five years ago, so he was able to give me a lot of insight into what to expect. His biggest advice was to listen to the doctors and don't rush to get back onstage. They told him to hold off, but he went back out to perform and nothing came out. Well, OK. I get it. Bruce waited a month before his first show, so I held off a little longer. My last treatment was in September and I made plenty of time to rest, exercise and eat right before we went back out on tour. We did 22 dates overseas, and I feel great now, except for the fatigue. But I think a lot of that might be due to um, extracurricular activities. Staying up late. Not sleeping. Maybe a little, you know…"

Thumb and forefinger to his lips, Dave inhales sharply, making the universal symbol for partaking of the herb. Could he be referring to the alleged medicinal benefits of CBD oil?

"Don't screw around with the oil, man," he growls in the same gravel baritone as his crushing thrash classics. Our eyes go wide as the voice from sixth grade *Headbangers Ball* comes to life.

Dave cackles at our reaction, pushing back a wayward strand of hair. "If you're gonna do it, get the good stuff. I think the world is just now finding out the beauty of cannabis and everything it can do for you. I hear people talk how it's good for cancer patients. C'mon, it's good for *any* fucking patient! The radiation zapped my salivary glands so I couldn't make spit, which made it really hard to swallow and get food down. They gave me this crazy mouthwash to use that had Benadryl and lidocaine in it, but I still couldn't eat. So cannabis helped with that, except I got a terrible craving for kiddie cereal. I went to the store and got, like, 20 boxes."

The thought of the *Tornado Of Souls* singer devouring countless bowls of cereal is a pretty cool picture and we can't help but inquire about his favourite fix. "Trix with marshmallows. Froot Loops with marshmallows. Frosted Flakes. The kind with little marshmallows. You get the idea. My cancer team told me to try and watch the sugar intake, but they said, 'Dave, if you can eat – then *eat*.' The doctor threatened to put a feeding tube in my gut if I lost too much weight. Well, they scared the shit out of me with that one, but it worked."

With Dave healthy and back onstage, the follow-up to 2016's Grammy Award-winning *Dystopia* is on every Megafan's brain. Late last year, Dave teased songs that were "heavy as hell" with titles such as *Rattlehead, Part Two* and *The Dogs Of Chernobyl*.

"I don't know if any of those titles are still holding up," he says, revealing that the band has been tracking at Nashville's Sound Kitchen with co-producer Chris Rakestraw at the controls again. "Whenever I make a record, the names of the songs change so many times. I think we've got 14 songs for this album and another folder with six. The songs are constantly evolving and as they do, we change the title to be more reflective of what makes the song distinct."

So, will we see a new Megadeth album before 2020 ends? "I hope so, yeah," says Dave. "We'll start back in a couple of days and keep plowing until it's done. Metal Tour Of The Year starts this summer, but that should be fun and easy. We've got a week's vacation coming up soon and I'm going to go rest up and get ready to come back and make a brilliant record."

Nashville traffic is anarchy these days and Romeo looks like he needs to hike his leg. As the sun sets over the Cumberland River, Dave stands and slides an arm around our shoulder, recruiting *Metal Hammer* to thank the fans for all their thoughts and prayers. It strikes us, how we expect legends to be carved from granite. On one hand, we understand that our heroes are human. But on the other, we never want to see them frail, or sick, or down. And that must be a hell of a burden sometimes. But perhaps, it's also what keeps them moving. If our heroes can keep pushing, then that gives us the courage to keep pushing too, through all the shitstorms of life, disasters both natural and manufactured, even the ones we bring upon ourselves. Decades later, they still inspire perseverance, hope, and the determination to never let the bastards grind you down. Maybe even a little 21st century metal up your ass.

Still, we have to ask one last thing. Dave's been on the road almost 40 years. Dues paid; the mark has been made. Was he ever tempted to call it a day, sit back on the farm and enjoy a slow, simple life?

"Yeah, I guess I could do that," he admits, shrugging like it's no big deal. "But I love what I do, and I like helping the band and crew make money. Playing music makes people happy. A lot of times while we're out there, they share stuff with us, some good, some bad, but we get to bring our own little brand of panacea to people and somehow, that makes them feel beautiful. Even if it's for just one night." MH

THE NEW MEGADETH ALBUM IS EXPECTED LATER THIS YEAR. SEE WWW.MEGADETH.COM AND WWW.METALHAMMER.COM

MEN OF

GETTY

STEEL

Judas Priest were ready to take on the world as 1980 dawned. They just needed the album to help them do it. Forty years on, this is the story of *British Steel*

WORDS: MALCOLM DOME

Stolen tapes. Smashed milk bottles. Flying cutlery. Police cars. They all play a part in the story of how *British Steel* became one of the most significant UK metal albums of all time. As we celebrate the 40th anniversary of its release, it's worth noting that it remains an elite album that set the tone and style for much that followed. The impact of *British Steel* was global, and continues to this day.

By the time Judas Priest recorded *British Steel* in early 1980, they had already released five studio albums and one live record, and were steadily building momentum. Previous studio LP *Killing Machine*, released in 1978, had peaked at No.32 in the UK and became the band's highest-charting record in the US where (under the title *Hell Bent For Leather*) it reached No.128. The following year, live album *Unleashed In The East* ramped things up commercially, as it hit No.10 in Britain and No.70 in the States. Judas Priest were poised for a major breakthrough – and this is the story of how it happened, through the eyes of those who were there.

The band (vocalist Rob Halford, guitarists Glenn Tipton and K.K. Downing, bassist Ian Hill and new drummer Dave Holland, who had replaced Les Binks) convened with producer Tom Allom at Startling Studios. It was based at Tittenhurst Park, a 72-acre estate in Ascot, Berkshire, and had once been owned by John Lennon but now belonged to Ringo Starr. Given how important this album would prove to be, it's astonishing that Priest hadn't finished writing the songs when they went in.

Glenn Tipton: "I can't remember why we chose to do it this way. We had never done that in the past, and never worked like that again. We had about 60% of the songs written and ready to go. I know *The Rage* was written in the studio, and so was *Living After Midnight*."
K.K. Downing: "We were always confident that we would get the stuff written in time, and sometimes being spontaneous like this can work to your advantage."
Tom Allom: "I recall that they had a lot of ideas and riffs, but not many songs actually ready. The band had been constantly touring, so never had the time to get the material written. There was also no time for any pre-production. I had only just finished producing Def Leppard's first album, *On Through The Night*, at the same

Rob Halford:
Metal God. Legendary Lad

GETTY

Backbreaking work: K.K. Downing and Rob Halford at the Rockford Speedway, Illinois, in July 1980

studio, so pretty much went straight back in there with Priest."

K.K. Downing: "[Ringo] wasn't there at the time. But he took all the valuables out, and also set down rules for us to follow. There was to be no riding of motorbikes on the grounds – so we did that. There was also to be no fishing in the lake – so we did that as well! What do you expect from a Brummie heavy metal band? He also had two papier-mâché dinosaurs hidden in the grounds – they were massive. And when you came back pissed from the pub up the road, they could really scare you!"

Work started on February 1, 1980, and was completed by the end of that month. This was the first studio album Priest did with Tom Allom, although he had been at the helm for *Unleashed In The East*. He then collaborated with the band on their next five studio albums and one live release across the 80s (and subsequently returned to co-produce 2018's *Firepower*). The band recorded in various rooms throughout the house, not just in the studio, experimenting to get the best sound for each instrument.

K.K. Downing: "Tom was great. He was an excellent musician as well – a much better piano player than any of us. He also came up with a lot of ideas. He was a great addition to the team."

Tom Allom: "Everyone wanted a really live sound for the album. So, it made sense to use rooms all over the house to get the right ambience for each instrument. I know we got Dave a massive drum sound in the hallway. I would probably have gone down the same route with Leppard, but because they were so young and inexperienced it was important to have everything in a more controlled environment. But Priest were older and used to going into studios, so we could spread ourselves out more. Besides, the band already knew the layout at Tittenhurst Park, because that's where we'd mixed *Unleashed In The East*."

K.K. Downing: "You know the famous room at Tittenhurst Park where John Lennon did the video for *Woman*? We took out the TV and pool table that were in there and used it to rehearse. I did my guitar parts in the library. We used any place available to get the best possible sounds."

The band put a lot of imagination into creating particular sounds on the album, using cutlery, milk bottles and a billiard cue. They even used a kettle to mimic an effect, all in the unholy name of metal. In the 1980s, bands had to get creative, because the advantages offered by modern technology were still in the realms of science fantasy… and none of them knew Doctor Who well enough to blag a trip in the TARDIS.

Tom Allom: "There were no such thing as samples in those days. So bands had to be a lot more inventive. I often feel sorry for young musicians now, because they've got everything at their fingertips. That's the sort of thing that can stunt creativity."

Glenn Tipton: "What we did for *Metal Gods* was load up a drawer with cutlery. Then we shook it, and took out spoons and knives until we got it just right. It was trial and error, but worth it in the end. *Breaking The Law* features the sound of milk bottles. We just got a load of them, smashed them on the ground and recorded these. It had the desired impact. But the sound of the sirens on that track is real. We went outside and recorded a passing police car – or at least that's my recollection of events!"

"THE PAPIER-MÂCHÉ DINOSAURS COULD REALLY SCARE YOU!"
K.K. DOWNING, GUITARS

K.K. Downing: "We'd come up with crazy ideas in those days. And who wouldn't want to join in with smashing bottles at the back of the house? It was fun. We even tried stuff like putting light bulbs in the microwave, to hear if the noises they made when heated up could be used somewhere. Anything was possible; nothing was off limits."

Tom Allom: "We wanted to get the sound of a laser beam cutting through at one point [for *Rapid Fire*]. So, we got a billiard cue and waved it through the air, with microphones above and below. And then I recall we slowed the tape down, to get the sound you hear on the track. And you know the cowbell on *Breaking The Law*? We used a kettle to get that sound. It was so badly beaten up that I doubt it was ever boiled again!"

Prior to the release, a story appeared in the media claiming that the master tapes for the album had been stolen by a gang in New York (where it was being mastered) and held to ransom for £50,000. This was all nonsense and had been dreamt up by Tony Brainsby, Priest's publicist at the time, who was infamous for concocting wild tales to get his clients attention. It didn't go down at all well with Priest, but it certainly worked, as the band received coverage in the sort of national papers who would usually ignore them.

K.K. Downing: "If we'd have got wind of what Tony was planning, then we'd have told him not to do it. Judas Priest don't need such cheap publicity. Our music is what makes us stand or fall. Not cheap shots like this."

Feel the steel: K.K. Downing, Glenn Tipton and Rob Halford in March 1980

British Steel was released by Columbia in April 1980, and lived up to expectations on every level. *Rolling Stone* magazine said at the time: 'It rocks with a classic heavy metal vengeance, fuelled by the machine-gun rhythms and crackling guitar attack of punk offspring like the Ramones and The Damned. The result is a collection of killer cuts.' The album stormed to No.4 in the British chart – still their highest position – and smashed through to No.34 in the US. Despite *British Steel*'s success, the origin of the name was shrouded in mystery.

K.K. Downing: "My recollection is that we saw the cover artwork [done by Rosław Szaybo] before we had the title. It may have been Ian Hill who suggested the name and it could have also been the fact that Glenn used to work for the British Steel Corporation. But the idea of calling it *British Steel* definitely made sense."

Tom Allom: "Who would have believed there would be so many definitive Priest songs on this one album? The whole recording process was very business-like, and looking back now it all went like a dream. We were under a little pressure, because the label wanted it out in April, so we had to have it wrapped up by the end of February. But there were no crises or fall-outs. We just got on with things."

Glenn Tipton: "At the time, we knew it was good, just not how special it would turn out. You just don't realise when you're in the middle of the process what you have is a classic. Only later on, when everyone tells you… that's when it really hits home."

There were three hit singles from the album in the UK. Both *Breaking The Law* and *Living After Midnight* reached No.12, while *United* peaked at 26. The videos for the first two were directed by Julien Temple, who says of the band: "There is a definite comedic element to Judas Priest, as I'm sure they know. We had a lot of fun doing these shoots".

By the time *British Steel* was released, Priest had just completed 21 dates in Britain supported by Iron Maiden – one of the all-time great metal tours. They subsequently went to the US, playing a successful mix of headline and support dates. Priest were also second on the bill at the inaugural Monsters Of Rock festival at Donington in August 1980 (headlined by Rainbow), with the final show of the world tour happening on August 23 at the Golden Summernight festival in Nuremberg, Germany.

"WE SHOOK THE SPOONS AND KNIVES UNTIL WE GOT IT RIGHT"

GLENN TIPTON

There were a whole raft of classic albums put out that year, including releases from Black Sabbath, Iron Maiden, Saxon, Ozzy, Motörhead and AC/DC. And *British Steel* is among the finest. So, how do the band rate it?

Rob Halford: "It's right up with our best. I think with every great album, there's a timeless feel. You listen to the first Sabbath album, *Led Zeppelin II* or any of the wonderful Pink Floyd records and they don't just belong to an era. If I had a time machine right now, I could take *British Steel* back or forwards, play it to people and they would feel it belonged to them. That's the reason so many big names in metal say they were influenced by it. I think this is where we found our direction. Up until that point, although we'd done well, there was a feeling in the band that we really didn't have a proper focus."

K.K. Downing: "For me, it's the most important album we ever did. Everything came together so well. We were all in a great frame of mind, and the results were as good as everyone hoped. It elevated the band to the next level and finally put us on the path to where we wanted to be. We not only found our sound, but also our image with the leather and studs. I also believe that with *British Steel* we opened up a new era for heavy metal in general. Bands like Iron Maiden and Saxon, who supported us at various stages on the 1980 tour, went on to be very successful in their own right and benefited from what we did on this album. It was an exciting time, and *British Steel* really was the start of it all."

JUDAS PRIEST HEADLINE BLOODSTOCK FESTIVAL ON AUGUST 9 – SEE P.107.
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ADDITIONAL K.K. DOWNING QUOTES: NEW MUSIC NEWS, 1980
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Judas Priest in February 1980 (left to right): K.K. Downing, Dave Holland, Rob Halford, Ian Hill, Glenn Tipton

SHUTTERSTOCK. GETTY.

ATLAS ICONS/NEIL ZLOZOWER

“ALL OF A SUDDEN, HE WAS GONE”

Peter Steele’s untimely death sent shockwaves through the metal scene. Ten years on, we pay tribute to the Type O Negative frontman’s life and legacy

WORDS: RICH HOBSON

PETER STEELE

On April 14, 2010, the world finally came down. Peter Steele, frontman of goth-metal icons Type O Negative, was declared dead from heart failure. It was a bitter sting of irony almost befitting the band's pitch-black humour, considering Peter had spent the past 20 years singing about the wars and woes of that very same organ.

Born Peter Thomas Ratajczyk in the Red Hook neighbourhood of Brooklyn in 1962, Steele's musical career began in 1979 with the formation of Fallout. Though not his first band – having already played in garage-band projects such as Hot Ice and Northern Lights – Fallout's thundering proto-thrash laid the DNA for his harder projects, while also putting him alongside two musicians who would shape his later success: Josh Silver (future Type O Negative keyboardist) and Louie Beateaux (future Carnivore drummer, later re-christened 'Beato').

At that point New York City was in a state of flux; Ramones had kickstarted the first wave of US punk just three years earlier (a wave that would continue to spread across the nation until it broke on the West Coast and came back as the equally colossal tidal wave of hardcore), but the city itself was already growing tired of the heavier music from the past decade. "Disco had taken over," recalls Richard Termini, a friend of Peter's and producer of Fallout's only surviving singles (*Batteries Not Included/Rock Hard*). "Heavier bands and those that were progressive were seen as dinosaurs, but Peter had this incredible imagination for imagery, while [guitarist and fellow songwriter] John Campos was a lot more sensitive. Together it was a Dave Gilmour/Roger Waters thing."

This duality split the band in two; Josh and John started the new wave-influenced Original Sin, while Louie and Peter made their first dents on the metal world as Carnivore. Dialling up the heaviness and incorporating elements of the city's nascent hardcore/thrash scenes, Carnivore were a B-movie made flesh, Peter exercising his imagination with songs about thermo-nuclear war, cannibalism and post-apocalyptic warfare. The band supplemented such visions with a roaring live show, earning local legend status with frequent shows at L'Amour, a metal/punk club beloved by Brooklynites – including Life of Agony's Joey Zampella. "[LOA bassist] Alan Robert and I got absolutely massacred in the pit at a Carnivore L'Amour show," Joey cackles. "In fact, one of Life of Agony's first big shows was Negative Night Two

Christian women, form an orderly queue. Peter onstage with Type O at Chicago's Vic Theatre in 2007

with Carnivore, Biohazard and Sheer Terror – it was such a big deal for us."

As with most local scenes, 80s/90s Brooklyn was a somewhat incestuous entity, members of various bands intermingling and connecting along the road – which is how Louie Beato eventually came to tutor his successor. "Louie and Peter lived just up the neighbourhood from me," remembers Type O Negative founding member Sal Abruscato. "I was apprenticing at this Latino blacksmith shop that made cowbells they'd sell to lots of big Latin American musical stars. Before I started, Louie and Peter worked there too, so the boss suggested I go to Louie to take drum lessons and we became buddies."

Even in the glory days of 80s music industry excess, a hardcore/thrash crossover band had their work cut out if they wanted to succeed, and Carnivore's lack of touring ensured they'd never pull in big bucks. "When Carnivore eventually broke up, the guys got regular jobs," Richard Termini says. "Peter was working at the Parks Department and Louie became a bus driver. Peter was happy doing that – he was still making music, but he wasn't so interested in becoming a star."

Peter may not have wanted to be a star, but fate had other plans in mind and it wasn't long before it came knocking (literally). "I heard the news [about the break-up] and figured I'd go over unannounced and see how he was doing," says Sal. "His father answered the door and let me down, and there's Peter sitting in bed watching TV, having just cut all his hair off! He had just took the New York Police Department test; he didn't want to play music anymore. I asked if he wanted to hang out and jam, have some fun. He nods, saying he's always wanted to have a band with electronica – keyboards, samples and things like that. I'm like, 'Yeah, cool man!' just saying anything so I could play with the guy!"

This spur-of-the-moment decision set in motion the formation of one of the 90s' most distinctive and successful metal bands. Reconnecting with ex-Fallout bandmate Josh Silver on keyboards and pulling in Kenny Hickey on guitars, the then-unnamed band gathered at Brooklyn's Marine Park for their first official band meeting. Cycling through names such as Subzero and New Minority, they decided on the name Repulsion for their first demo – material that would later be remastered into Type O Negative's debut release *Slow, Deep And Hard* after one final rebrand. That first release is a furious, bilious entity that locks horns with love, infidelity and violence. But, where Carnivore drew from Peter's imagination, these new songs were about Peter's own recent experiences. "That record was about his ex-girlfriend at the time," Sal says. "The scenario from *Kill You Tonight* literally happened to him – he took the D-train to Brighton Beach and caught her screwing on the sand!"

Ties to hardcore weren't the only thing that Peter retained from the Carnivore days – he was still locked into a contract with his former label. "At the time Roadrunner was a tiny little label, and Peter wanted out," explains Monte Conner, the A&R rep who ended up bringing Type O Negative back into the Roadrunner fold. "He wasn't happy with how those two Carnivore records were handled, and the owner of the label came to me with the Repulsion demo and asked what I wanted to do with it – should we let him go, or bring it in to Roadrunner? I thought it was amazing, and we'd have been nuts to let him go!"

"THIS GIRL HUNG AROUND THE STUDIO, PRAYING AND KISSING THE DOOR"
MAX ROSS, SYSTEMS TWO STUDIOS

Even with Monte working directly with the band, it didn't stop the legend that the band put out the 'live' record *The Origin Of The Feces* – essentially just their debut rerecorded with crowd sounds – as a 'fuck you' to the label. "We knew!" laughs Monte. "Peter was never happy with anything he did – within days of turning something in he'd want to make changes. *Origin...* was just Peter's way of re-doing *Slow, Deep And Hard* to his liking."

The same, irrepressible creative energies that seemed to fuel Peter to constantly tweak material also allowed Type O Negative to completely transform themselves. "The move into [1993's] *Bloody Kisses* made a lot of sense," explains Sal. "We'd hang out on weekends and go into New York at the height of its club phase, and Peter *went in* on the whole jet-black hair thing. The next record took on influences of that scene – songs like *Black No.1* were about the people we'd see. It was great because we knew we couldn't just keep playing the heavy-heavy stuff forever."

The result was an enormous shift in tone and style, upping the band's more gothic elements and leaning into their newfound doom-adjacent sound, while also incorporating 60s psychedelia and pop for a diverse, twisted dreamscape. If the stylistic change shocked Roadrunner at all, it certainly didn't concern them. "The minute we heard the demo it was obvious the band had become extremely unique," Monte says. "Songs like *Christian Woman* and *Black No.1* stood out as obvious singles – even in demo form."

Even with label backing and support, *Bloody Kisses* was by no means an overnight success, and not long after its release, Sal decided to leave the band. "We got blinded with some drama at that time, and I ended up quitting the band right when the record was coming out," he says. "It just didn't seem like things were going to work, or that we were going to tour."

The forecast looked grim – Josh even sent pizzas to Roadrunner's offices as a way of breaking the news lightly that it looked like the band were through. And then – somewhat ironically – tour offers started pouring in. Kenny's

GETTY

ex-bandmate Johnny Kelly was brought into the fold to fill the vacant drum stool, receiving one pearl of wisdom on joining: "Don't quit your day job!" he laughs. "When our manager asked if I could get time off to tour, it was a surprise. We ended up playing for six weeks in the States, playing clubs, and then went back to our jobs. It wasn't long before we got the call saying Nine Inch Nails wanted us to tour with them, then the same thing happened with Mötley Crüe and we were doing it all over again. We ended up quitting our jobs, but even at that point we weren't expecting to make a career out of it!"

Touring alongside some of the biggest metal bands on the planet was just the boost in profile Type O needed, and on November 9, 1995, *Bloody Kisses* was certified gold by the RIAA – the first such award in Roadrunner's history. "We had no idea just how successful that record was going to be and how it would affect people around the world," Sal explains. "Even after we're all gone, it feels like people will still listen to these albums. We were guys who just loved The Beatles – they had a massive effect on Type O Negative and to me *Bloody Kisses* was the *White Album* of the 90s."

Follow-up *October Rust* doubled down on the gothic/doom elements that had made *Bloody Kisses* so successful, while also introducing just enough new wave to finally make full use of Josh Silver's keyboards. "*October Rust* caught Peter at his most prepared," Johnny says. "It surprised me, because we'd been on the road so much. It never worked like that again; after that, it'd take six months just to think about getting together."

Far from being buoyed by two successful records back to back, things had started to go sour in Peter's personal life as work started on the next release. Infamously difficult, *World Coming Down* took Type O in a more thunderously doomy direction, whilst also bearing Peter's most candid lyrics to date. "Peter's personal life bled into that record," Johnny says. "Peter wasn't in top form – drugs had started to get in the way of things. It's so powerful, but also very depressing. Even worse, he really didn't want to play those songs live. Like, 'Why do I want to be reminded of this again?!'"

Luckily, the darkness didn't last, and was almost nowhere to be seen on the band's next release, 2003's *Life Is Killing Me*. "Josh brought in some demos for *Life Is Killing Me*" remembers Max Ross, one of the 'enginucers' at Systems Two studios at the time. "I'd never worked with a band like Type O, but the guys were a blast and it was constant jokes. People would send packages and flowers in constantly; this girl came round every day and would hang around just praying and kissing the door!"

All styles and subgenres of their sound to that point were revisited, but crucially so too was the band's caustic humour. "Everything in Type O was like a sarcastic comedy," Johnny says. "Unfortunately, a lot of people missed that! But that's why I absolutely loved the band on that first record – I thought it was hysterical, this guy going through absolute agony and deciding to put doo-wop vocals to his feelings!"

Unfortunately, *Life Is Killing Me* was doomed from the start – a fact mirrored in its original title, *The Dream Is Dead*. "Roadrunner was becoming a different record company by that point and Type O weren't the big fish in the pond anymore," Johnny admits. "I know I for one was disappointed in how the *World Coming Down* record had been handled, but even with that they tried to persuade us to sign another deal by telling us if we did, they'd push this record. It was like, 'Well, why don't you push this record first and *then* we'll talk?'"

"DRUGS HAD STARTED TO GET IN THE WAY"

JOHNNY KELLY, DRUMMER

Type O Negative's relationship with Roadrunner had run its course, but the break-up wasn't acrimonious enough to sever ties completely. Despite officially signing to SPV Records in June 2004, Peter, Johnny and Josh still found time to contribute to the landmark Roadrunner United project in 2005 (an all-star album organised by their old A&R Rep, Monte Conner).

While Peter celebrated with his musical family, his personal life took a downward spiral. In 2005, he spent a short stint in New York prison complex Rikers Island, for assaulting a man ("Over a woman of course," he told *Hammer*'s Alexander Milas in 2007). But the worst was yet to come when his mother passed away in 2006 – something he had fretted about while serving time. "Every time I'd speak to my mother I never knew if I was going to speak to her again," he told Alex Zander of *MK Ultra Magazine*. "That was a real jail sentence for me."

Recognising how bad things had got prompted a period of soul-searching and reflection for Peter. It also prompted him to revisit some of his past output, leading to the resurrection of Carnivore with an all-new line-up, including Life Of Agony's Joey Z on guitars. Spots were booked at European festivals and, despite being a local sensation the first time round, Carnivore finally went international. "That tour was *nuts*!" Joey exclaims. I remember we played Wacken; we stepped out onto the stage and Peter plays a couple chords and just goes, 'Thank you, goodnight!' and walks offstage. We were offstage for about 10 minutes, then came back and did the exact same thing again! But this time went into a song – they just went *crazy*."

Returning to his past also seemed to force Peter to address some of the

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Type O Negative (left to right): Kenny Hickey, Johnny Kelly, Peter Steele, Josh Silver in 1999

demons he'd struggled with throughout his life, kickstarting a reflective period that set some major life changes in motion towards the end of the 00s. "One time in Germany Peter had a real rough night," Joey says. "The next day he was just broken – he wanted to talk, alone in a room. He spilled his guts to tears, talking about how he hadn't had the opportunity to have a family or children. He had his arm around me, told me he loved me and that I was his angel. I'll never forget that connection."

Type O's final record – 2007's *Dead Again* – saw more of a return to the hardcore fury of the band's debut as a result of Peter's time returning to Carnivore, but also due to extensive writing sessions at a studio in Rockaway (the same Queens peninsula that inspired Ramones' 'Rockaway Beach). Sadly it got reclaimed by the sea during [2012's] superstorm Sandy," says Johnny. "We'd go there five, six nights a week for, like, four to six months, working in the studio on new ideas and spent a lot of time jamming, which I think came across on the record."

Even with its longer run-times and decidedly more metallic bent, *Dead Again* became Type O's highest-charting album on release in the US, climbing to No.27 on the Billboard 200. "We'd been together for so long, but we weren't just slapping some shit together to head back out on the road!" Johnny says.

Type O's final tour started in New Jersey on October 16, 2009, with their last-ever show falling on a date so perfect it borders on ridiculous. "Our final show was at Harpos in Detroit on Halloween," Johnny says. "After the show we drove straight back to New York on the bus. Kenny and I had our wives there and we just stayed up late hanging out, singing Elton John songs along the highway – nobody knew it was the last show we'd ever play. At that point, we'd got past the feeling of a tour ending and thinking the band was gonna break up; we thought Peter was going to be like Lemmy and do it until we physically couldn't."

Seemingly in a healthier and happier place than he'd been in years, Peter had set about reconnecting with friends and bandmates of the past as 2009 drew to a close, sharing old stories, rebuilding relationships and expressing excitement in new ideas. This also meant that news of Peter's death came as an enormous shock. "There was a lot of discussion of the past that let us get over things," Sal says. "Then, all of a sudden he was gone. That's how the universe plays things – it takes away some of the most talented people on the planet and we can never replace them."

On announcement of his death, tributes poured in from some of the biggest figures in the metal scene, including Henry Rollins, Tony Iommi, Jamey Jasta and Phil Anselmo, while his iconoclastic approach influenced the likes of Code Orange, Chelsea Wolfe and Trivium. Peter Steele was an at-times contradictory figure, but with a creative spark that allowed him to transcend scenes and subgenres, deftly mixing goth, hardcore and doom metal culture in a way no band before – or since – has matched, taking four guys from Brooklyn and turning them into one of the biggest metal bands in the world for a time. "It felt more like surviving than creating a legacy!" laughs Johnny. "But here we are, 2020, and people still talk about the band."

"It's crazy to think this all stated with me knocking on Peter's door," Sal adds. "People are talking now about that first Black Sabbath record again for its 50th anniversary; kids who've never heard a note of that music are going to be checking it out. I don't see any reason why that wouldn't happen for Type O too, you know?"

Hail and Farewell to Peter Steele – a true metal icon.

***TYPE O NEGATIVE – THE COMPLETE ROADRUNNER COLLECTION* BOX SET IS OUT NOW, VIA ROADRUNNER RECORDS. MEMBERS OF TYPE O NEGATIVE NOW PLAY IN THE BANDS A PALE HORSE NAMED DEATH AND SILVERTOMB**

DOUR POWER

We asked Peter's friends for their memories of the great man

CAPTAIN OF INDUSTRY
"Peter had this chain around his bass and all this industrial hardware to create this insane look. He would also sometimes rip the strings off his bass at the end of the set with his bare hands!"
Richard Termini, producer

HARDCORE PERFORMER
"We were up against the original hardcore audience to start with, because Carnivore would always end up playing at CBGB's with Sheer Terror, Crumbsuckers and Whiplash. During the early days, Type O would play three or four Carnivore songs in our set, because the hardcore guys still showed up expecting the wild moshpits of Carnivore. They didn't really understand songs like *I Know You're Fucking Someone Else* – going from thrashy to half-time suddenly, or following it up with *Prelude To Agony* which was *really* slow – they hated it!"
Sal Abruscato, drummer

DIY SAVIOUR
"Life Of Agony were at [keyboardist] Josh Silver's house demoing stuff that would become [1993 debut album] *River Runs Red*. We'd hear all these tools clanking, and it was Pete in the backyard building a gigantic crucifix for use in the *Christian Woman* video. He walks up in really short cut-off denim shorts, with these really long, skinny legs and tube socks, looking for something to eat. It was such a scene!"
Alan Robert, bass, Life Of Agony

MUSICAL MADMAN
"Peter had this crazy idea – and if anyone wants to try this, I wish them good luck. He wanted to rig up giant cable fencing, and you could strike the cables and they'd be electrified, so you'd hit them and they'd make noise and fire sparks off. I have no idea how that was gonna work, but he knew he wanted to do it!"
Joey Z, guitars, Life Of Agony

AUTOMOBILE ANARCHIST
"I'd sometimes drive Peter home in my car, but other times we would take his crazy car that he'd put together himself. It had wooden boards for a bumper and the doors wouldn't lock, so he used this huge bungee cord to keep the door closed while he drove. A gas mask hung from the mirror, and he'd put a train horn in the car, so that if he honked all the car alarms would go off in the area!"
Max Ross, engineer/producer

SHUTTERSTOCK

NOT DEAD YET

Trivium are done making mistakes. As they release one of the best albums of their career, we discover how they got their mojo back

WORDS: STEPHEN HILL

"I have a theory, so hear me out: Trivium are kind of the Jon Snow of the metal scene," says frontman Matt Heafy, as he sits back and considers his band's place in the world. "You know, we were tipped to be the kings back on *Ascendancy*, and that hasn't really happened for a multitude of reasons, but I feel like the story isn't over and the door has creaked open for us again. We're back, and we're here to grab the crown!"

If those words had come out of Matt's mouth four years ago, then you'd assume he was suffering from a rather uncharacteristic delusion, because it's fair to say the 10s didn't go to plan for his band. They started well enough, as 2011's *In Waves* was released to a warm reception, leaving the band in a great position to capitalise on some goodwill. But the next two records – 2013's David Draiman-produced *Vengeance Falls* and 2015's power-metal-themed follow-up *Silence In The Snow* – were frustratingly patchy and uneven. It was particularly disheartening for fans, as this was the second time that Trivium had let momentum slip in their career. In 2006, *The Crusade* nearly derailed all of the excitement that surrounded their breakthrough album, *Ascendancy*.

"We've made a lot of questionable decisions and bad choices over the years," sighs Matt. "And I have to take responsibility for a lot of them. I didn't always back myself or back my band; I spend a lot of time second-guessing."

To come back once, as they did by following *The Crusade* with 2008's superb *Shogun*, is impressive. To do it twice is practically unheard of – but it's a trick Trivium managed. In late 2017, with little in the way of fanfare or expectation, they released what is possibly their magnum opus: *The Sin And The Sentence*. We described it as Trivium 'absorbing all of their past and bettering it'. Fans and critics fawned over it in a way they hadn't since those early *Ascendancy* hype days. Trivium were suddenly the name on everyone's lips again, and they headed out on a tour that took in a *Hammer*-sponsored UK run with Code Orange, Power Trip and Venom Prison. It culminated in a career-best performance at a sold-out and dizzy Brixton Academy, and a Main Stage set pre-Slipknot at last year's Download festival, which finally freed them from the shackles of that famous 2005 early morning show.

"What a day that was," Matt grins. "I couldn't quite believe what was happening then. The UK has always been special to us, but when people were singing back the songs from *Sin*... louder than the songs from *Ascendancy*... I couldn't believe it. *Betrayer* got a better reaction than *Pull Harder On The Strings Of Your Martyr*! How did that happen?!"

So, everything's set up for Trivium to conquer... again. But based on previous experience, it's only human to question whether there's going to be a happy ending. Surely Matt's aware there's no more room for slip-ups. "Of course, it's something that we've talked about a lot in the band," he nods. "I think back and I wonder if we had just made *Ascendancy Part 2*, what would have happened? Where would we be now? But I'm past wanting to be the next Metallica – I just want to be the first Trivium. I think we've righted those wrongs now."

Today's Matt Heafy is far more confident and self-assured than the one we spoke to during the *Silence In The Snow* days. Back then, he seemed hesitant and almost apologetic for the missteps his band had taken, his vocal problems leaving him unable to sing how he wanted to sing, and therefore unable to express himself in the way he longed to. Today he speaks with excitement, passion and, most importantly, unshakable belief about Trivium's new record.

"I think we've finally found a way to make this band work," he says.

"TRIVIUM ARE THE JON SNOW OF THE METAL SCENE"

MATT HEAFY

"We make our best, angriest, heaviest, hardest music when we're all really happy! I know that sounds kind of like an oxymoron, but it's true. We spent years and years taking everyone else's advice on board and making calculated attempts to try and do something with our records, and now we just get in a room, just the four of us, and make music that makes all of us happy."

The result is Trivium's ninth album, *What The Dead Men Say*. We're pleased to say that, finally, Trivium have delivered when they most needed to. It's full of the twisting, rhythmically challenging riffs they've built a career from, some chunky, powerhouse choruses, and is imbued with a touch of *Shogun*'s more progressive leanings. It's another banger, and it's tempting to wonder why it's taken them this long to nail it...

"Who knows," Matt laughs. "But it's happened now. Some bands just need to take their time and do things at their own pace. I feel like I'm a better guitarist now. I mean, I practise far more than I ever did before, because I have two jobs now..."

Even taking the strides made by his band out of the equation, the last few years have been interesting for Matt Heafy. He's carved out another niche, as a prolific streamer on the online gaming platform Twitch, developing quite a fanbase, some of whom weren't even aware of his career as a metal frontman. He streams himself gaming and performing covers and reworked version of Trivium songs.

"I play guitar for about six hours every day online now," he says. "It's sharpened up my skills to a place where I never had them before. That muscle memory is really important, and we have it now – that's a religion and a discipline for us. It meant that we went in and recorded the album in 16 days! The Twitch thing makes me money for my family, but I like to be connected to people, to interact with people and see what gets them excited and inspired."

The family that Matt's providing for has grown. In late 2018, he welcomed twins to the world, and says they've made him feel complete for the first time. "I used to sit there with my wife at home and we'd think everything was pretty good, but it always felt like something was missing," he smiles with pride. "With these two, we will never feel that again. It's one of the most amazing and challenging things, a constant source of drive and inspiration. Life feels right, and I know that everything I do is for them."

Now motivated by his children's wellbeing, outside influences are unlikely to play a part in derailing the band again. "Absolutely, I think that my children have played a major part in this record," he nods. "It was such a crazy time for me when they were born. I had to leave our biggest-ever US tour, and watch someone else sing my songs on the stream of those shows, to be there for their births, which were long and complex. And then 10 days later, we had to have our dog of 10 years put down. That was our baby until that point and he was gone, and then you have to learn on the job to be a father... It was a very difficult time, but it does put everything into perspective, because I was scared of having kids."

As a touring musician, those fears had been drilled into Matt from an early age. "I remember being sat in a dressing room on one of our very early tours," he says. "And someone from a much older band said to me, 'Having kids was the worst thing I ever did!' He then went onto explain how the touring lifestyle affects you, and how it's impossible to be a real presence in

PRESS

Trivium (clockwise from top): Corey Beaulieu, Paolo Gregoletto, Matt Heafy, Alex Bent

Last year's Download set: Trivium had it licked

their lives. And that stayed with me as a young and impressionable guy, but as the years and our lives progressed it was something that we really felt we needed to do. I think if there's something inside you that you feel you need to do, even if it induces fear in you, you shouldn't ignore that."

Despite his manic personal life, Matt can still be relied upon to delve into metal's underground and rep for smaller, younger and newer bands. It's to his credit that he still seems as passionate about metal all these years down the line.

"That's very important to me," he shoots back. "I can't understand these bands that say they haven't listened to anything new since 1987, or that nothing good has come out since then. People are too consumed with themselves in our society. Take metal out of it for the moment; there is something great about cultivating a community and having shared experiences. One thing I love to do is eat together. When we're on tour, we always have a communal meal – the band, the crew, everyone – and that's a great shared experience. I want a metal scene that shares and supports each other, because we're only going to get to the place where we want to be as a community if we all go together. I like lots of different music, but I only have one deep true love, and that's metal, and I want it to be as strong as it can be."

It's clear Matt is revelling in his new-found role as an elder statesman. It's a position the haters never could have imagined for the cocky teen we were introduced to in the early 00s. But it fits him perfectly – something that's hammered home when we enquire if he feels secure about Trivium's place in the metal world now.

"Oh, 100%," he replies. "We might not be playing arenas, or have managed the achievements we were tipped for back in the early days, but, for me, *The Sin And The Sentence* really washed away all of the 'sins' of the past. Now we're in a place where we're happy, we're a genuine unit, and we know how to make this band work. Jon Snow's back, baby!"

Believe it with confidence – they're not going to let us down again. Trivium are finally ready to wear the crown. H

"WE'VE MADE A LOT OF BAD CHOICES"
MATT HEAFY

***WHAT THE DEAD MEN SAY* IS OUT ON APRIL 24 VIA ROADRUNNER**

DEAD MEN TELL TALES

How Trivium and other heavy musicians have been inspired by legendary author Philip K. Dick

What The Dead Men Say takes its name from a novella by the hugely influential and prolific science-fiction writer Philip K. Dick, which was published in 1964. The story revolves around a prominent businessman who begins to transmit his thoughts from beyond the grave, blocking television and radio networks in the process.

"It was really Paolo's [Gregoletto, bassist] idea and concept," Matt tells us. "He actually has really helped with lyric writing from the last album and into this one. He's a very well-read and articulate guy, he brings a great amount of literary references to the table, and it's been great for me as I can approach the songs almost in character, which is a new discipline for me. Philip K. Dick was clearly a genius, and there's a wealth of material to draw from his work."

Here are some more albums that were inspired by the great man.

TUBEWAY ARMY
Replicas (1979)
The second and final album from Gary Numan's proto-industrial, new wave band is inspired by Dick's most well-known work, the novel *Do Androids Dream Of Electric Sheep?*, which was adapted for the screen as *Blade Runner*. Far from bandwagon-jumping, Gary got the record out in 1979, a good three years before *Blade Runner*'s release, so there. It also spawned the massive banger, *Are 'Friends' Electric?* Good work, robot dude.

SONIC YOUTH
Sister (1987)
The New York art punks are one of the most revered bands in the history of alternative music, and for good reason. Their fourth studio album, 1987's *Sister*, is full of the kind of challenging and ambient noise punk that would help shape the grunge movement. The title refers to Philip K. Dick's twin sister, who passed away shortly after her birth, and whose death was said to have haunted him throughout his life.

CLUTCH
Psychic Warfare (2015)
Clutch's Neil Fallon is one of metal's most unique storytellers, so it's no surprise he's a fan of Philip K. Dick – something he admitted in the build-up to his band's 11th studio album, *Psychic Warfare*: "His general philosophy and questions have always crept into my lyrics, because I share an interest in it. On [2013's] *Earth Rocker*, *Crucial Velocity* was definitely a Philip K Dick song for me. On this record, *X-Ray Visions* certainly is."

KEVIN NIXON

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MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

Kathmandu might be known for its ornate temples and being a gateway to Mount Everest, but it's also Nepal's home of metal. We nipped over to watch Testament show us exactly why

WORDS: DOM LAWSON • PICTURES: DIPIT RAZ

Language barrier? Pfft! Chuck Billy throws the international sign of metal camaraderie

"We've been to a lot of places over 35 years. But now it's all about the *experience*," says Chuck Billy. The iconic Testament frontman is having the time of his life, as *Metal Hammer* catches up with him backstage at Silence Festival in Kathmandu, Nepal. We have been here before, of course, courtesy of local metal heroes Underside and their frankly heroic efforts to promote their homegrown scene. For Chuck and his Bay Area comrades, the chance to headline this one-day festival was too tempting to resist. As he tells us, sporting a huge grin that is only partly caused by the reportedly colossal quantities of local weed and hash that he's been hoovering down since his arrival, Testament have loved every second of their Nepali trip so far.

"Oh man, it's been amazing. We've been to temples all over. We've experienced all the local cuisines, with these huge silver plates, eating with our hands," he enthuses, miming yesterday's dinner. "We also had a plan to take a helicopter up to Mount Everest but the weather was fucked, so that was shut down. But I know the guys went to another temple and rode a cable car up in the hills. We've just been catching the culture. It's a trip, man. We keep saying that. It's just a trip that we're here."

Having travelled so much over the last three-and-a-half decades, Testament have had a few experiences that might be considered comparable to their debut in Kathmandu. Chuck speaks of earlier shows in both India and Indonesia, and he sounds genuinely admiring of the professionalism and resourcefulness that metal bands in Asia have shown him. But something about Kathmandu really seems to have struck a chord; as he soberly recounts his band's first taste of being driven around in the Nepali capital and witnessing the ongoing impact of the earthquake that decimated the city in 2015, he looks genuinely moved.

"Oh man, you can see it *everywhere*," he grimaces. "As we came in, we could see there was a lot of construction and rubble. Once we hit the ground and started driving around, you could really see it in the buildings. Everything's stone and brick, so it didn't have a great chance really. It's pretty intense to see."

Chuck's grin swiftly returns. "There was an earthquake here the other day, too. It was a 4.8! We were driving around at the time so we weren't sure if it was an earthquake or just the guy's driving! Ha ha ha!"

He takes a steady but hefty drag from his own branded THC vaporiser and then clicks into serious, focused mode. "The thing is, when we got the offer to play at Silence, I thought, 'Right, it's going to be a cultural experience first and foremost.' But then on top of that, we get to play our songs for a bunch of people who really don't get a chance to see much of us or any American bands, so that made it even more appealing."

"WE WERE DRIVING AROUND AND THERE WAS A 4.8 EARTHQUAKE"

CHUCK BILLY

The singer goes on to note that Testament were also hugely impressed by the way the Silence Festival organisers go out about their business. It's no mean feat, pulling off a metal festival in the middle of a city that is neither set up for such things in terms of infrastructure nor particularly enthusiastic about the whole idea on a societal level. As the event's prime movers, Underside guitarist Bikrant Shrestha and manager/festival director Flower are well versed in dealing with the authorities and having to turn themselves inside out in order to obtain the necessary permits. They were also involved in relief efforts, after the devastating earthquake that struck Kathmandu in 2015 and destroyed many people's homes. Through Metal For Nepal, a series of gigs across 12 countries, they raised funds to build houses in the stricken Gorkha district. It's a world away from the relentless commercialism of the American and European music industries, and Chuck seems enamoured with the punk rock spirit that seems to drive it all.

"This is such a small festival, man. They told me that it almost didn't happen, but once *we* signed on, everything started working and people started coming in from different areas.

Underside bring you the sound of Silence

So if a band like us didn't play I guess it would all be a lot more local and regional. They really need to have established bands here, so that fans go, 'You know what? I wanna go to Kathmandu too!' Because this is fucking cool, right? They're really making a great effort to do this. I hear they've built 325 houses, and that's another reason why we just said, 'Let's go!'"

While Chuck sings Silence Festival's praises, we can hear the event erupting in the background. Although Testament are the only internationally renowned band on the bill, the organisers have pieced together a stellar line-up of Asian heaviness, ranging from Indian death metal brutes Godless and Nepali grindcore legends Chepang through to Indonesian metal kings (and friends of *Hammer*) Burgerkill and, of course, Underside themselves.

Unfortunately, political unrest in Assam, India, has resulted in a blanket curfew and the band's drummer, Nishant Hagjer, is unable to make the journey to join his comrades at the festival. It all looks like being a huge disappointment for the band that started this whole event, not to mention for the vast crowd of local fans that they are expected to draw. But after a couple of hours of frantic, behind-the-scenes discussion, a solution falls into the band's lap; Testament drummer Gene 'The Atomic Clock' Hoglan has volunteered to learn Underside's set and is happy to fill in for Nishant at what can only be described as insanely short notice.

The day has been saved and the rest of Underside are now wearing smiles so broad they all look a bit mad. As frontman Avishek K.C. notes as he rushes past, mere minutes before his band takes the stage, "It's Gene fucking Hoglan!"

"That's Gene!" Chuck laughs. "It's no problem for him. We're happy to help out. You know, we're really not the most demanding band in the world. We're all pretty easy going. Someone like Rammstein, for example, their show is a lot more of a challenge to pull off. We just need things to work, a PA system and some lights, but as long as things work we are willing to make the trip, even to Kathmandu."

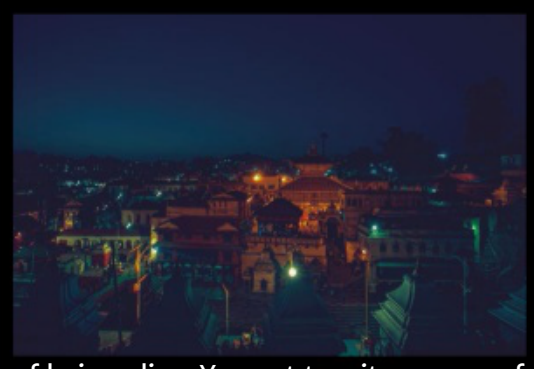
It would be generous to say that Underside's set with Gene Hoglan goes off without a hitch, but it's a triumph for the band and Silence Festival nonetheless: one of those "Were you there?" moments that Nepali metal fans will always cherish. As Avishek tells us later in the day, they managed to get through their songs without completely losing the plot and Gene did a sterling job at such short notice, but "there were definitely a few moments where no one knew what was going on!" Either way, the massive crowd that saw it certainly didn't care.

At last, it's time for Testament – Chuck, Gene, guitarists Alex Skolnick and Eric Peterson and bassist Steve Di Giorgio – to take the stage and give the local metal community the biggest thrill of its story so far. From his cheery opening, "How the fuck are you doing, Kathmandu?!" onwards, Chuck is clearly blown away by the response and he seems truly touched as the crowd chant his band's name in every available moment of quiet. From early classics like *Into The Pit* and *Disciples Of The Watch* to more recent rampages like *More Than Meets The Eye*,

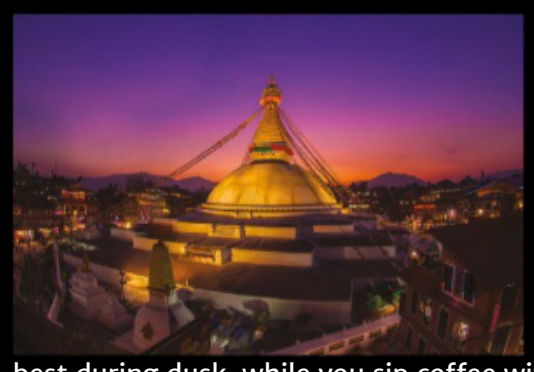
GETTY

KATHMAN-DO

Silence Director/Underside manager Flower chooses the best places to see in Kathmandu



PASHUPATINATH TEMPLE
"The most holy place for Hindu devotees around the world, and where they are cremated. Families mourn their loved ones, while on the other side of the river, devotees celebrate the joy of being alive. You get to witness one of the best vibes that reminds us to be kind and compassionate, and to take life easy, as you see where it all ends. A stressful day is well cured by spending time here with the monkeys around you, the voice of the prayers, and watching someone's last moment in the Earth turning into smoke."



BOUDHA
"It is one of the biggest stupa – a Buddhist commemorative monument – and devotees start praying as early as 4am. This place has a very different positive vibe that has answers to everyone's sorrow. It's best during dusk, while you sip coffee with all the meditation music and chants from the monks pleasing your ears."

DURBAR SQUARES
"Durbar square translates as 'Palace square', and they're the plazas opposite the old palaces that belonged to the kings in their respective cities of Kathmandu, Patan and Bhaktapur. They're full of life and people of all ages gather to share local food and drink. Bells from the temples create an ambient sound. It's a typical Nepali vibe."

THAMEL
"Thamel is actually the tourist area, and so every street is full of pubs, hostels and hotels. It's happening throughout the day and is best known for its late-night events. I prefer this place for live music, gathering with my friends and having a proper a night out."

KIRTIPUR
"Kirtipur is one of the oldest settlements, just 20 minutes away from the city centre. It's well known for keeping its tradition alive; people here still wear traditional dress, the houses are traditional, and everyone welcomes you with a smile. It's perfect for enjoying a proper traditional meal with homemade rice wine."

Underside with Gene Fucking Hoglan!

It's been a great success, no butts about it

Testament are on blistering form and loving every minute of it. There's an intensity to their performance that bodes extremely well for their forthcoming 13th studio album, *Titans Of Creation*. As Chuck confirms, these are exciting, productive times for the Bay Area legends and Silence festival is just the beginning.

"We took nine months off from touring just to focus on the record this time," he explains. "The process was a *lot* better than the one before [*Brotherhood Of The Snake*, 2016]. We weren't weaving in and out of tours, so we could focus on it. It came out *really* good. When I heard it first as an album I thought, 'Holy shit, that's a good record!' I think it's [esteemed producer and long-time Testament collaborator] Andy Sneap's best mix. He had fresh ears after he came back from playing with Judas Priest for a year, so yeah, holy shit, it sounds *great*."

With *Titans Of Creation* destined to be one of *the* metal albums of 2020, Chuck Billy has every reason to be full of optimism for his band's future. But whether they scale new heights of success or not, these veterans are still in love with the notion of finding new places to visit and new people to share some heavy fucking metal with. Kathmandu and its small but passionate metal community are now firmly on Chuck's list.

"They told us, 'Look, Nepal is a third world country, the production won't necessarily be top-notch…' but I just thought, 'OK, it's going to be one of those punk rock shows!' and that's cool, you know? Look at what they're putting on for people, with a big stage and all the lights! It's a proper show, man. The experience has just been amazing. We need to tell everyone, dude. Come to Nepal!"

"IT'S BEEN AN AMAZING EXPERIENCE. COME TO NEPAL!"

CHUCK BILLY

***TITANS OF CREATION* IS OUT ON APRIL 3 VIA NUCLEAR BLAST**

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"I'M NOT AFRAID OF *anything*"

Bury Tomorrow have long been outspoken about mental health, but new album *Cannibal* goes further than ever before. Dani Winter-Bates explains why he's facing the conversation head-on

WORDS: DANNII LEIVERS • PICTURES: TOM RUSSELL

BURY TOMORROW

'Nothing worth doing is easy' is a motto that Bury Tomorrow have lived, breathed and bled since they emerged during the height of the metalcore boom in 2006. It's a grit-your-teeth attitude that has seen them through many a tough time, and you get the sense it might just have got frontman Dani Winter-Bates through today, too. "We just filmed the video for [new single] *Better Below* in the studio next door, and we did some submersion tanks," he says when he greets us today, with a grin that's half-grimace. "I had to be put in water in a six-foot tank which was… fun." Was it cold?! "Fucking FREEZING!"

The band's journey to get here has been slow and often difficult. After almost splitting in the face of industry indifference in 2011, Bury Tomorrow continued to plug away, touring steadily and amassing an arsenal of fans and lightning-sharp anthems. Now, there's a real sense they're on the brink of taking a seat at UK metal's top table. Sensing this, it's been less than two years since they released their last album, 2018's *Black Flame*, but metalcore's most conscientious workhorses are back on the campaign trail for their new album, *Cannibal*.

We've come to meet Dani at a chilly studio in north London to chat about it. Unsurprisingly, their sixth full-length bears the same glorious hooks and zinging choruses that have made Bury Tomorrow such a beloved force in the metal world. But beneath its super-charged veneer, Dani explains that, lyrically, *Cannibal* is anything but business as usual.

"Before this album I took a conscious decision to be a lot more honest with people," he says, still wrapped up in a padded jacket after his earlier dunk. "Our fans know I've been on a journey and I've been open with them, but I haven't been open enough."

Dani's always been one of our scene's loudest advocates for the importance of looking after your mental health, frequently using his Twitter platform to post advice and mindfulness tips. And although he says he's written songs on the topic before, this time he wanted to strip away the metaphors he'd used in the past to mask the true darkness behind his lyrics, discussing the severity of his own experiences. Putting pen to paper was tough, not just for him, but for guitarist and clean vocalist Jason Cameron, who worked with him on the lyrics.

"He had to get into my head and I wouldn't want anyone to get into my head," he says. "Having to delve into my darkest moments was tough for him because he didn't know it was as bad as it was, because I hid it. Even Dav [Winter-Bates, Bury Tomorrow bassist and Dani's brother] would be the first to admit he didn't know how bad it got. Dav was like, 'This is really dark, Dan.' But it was a point where I thought, 'Fuck it, if I'm going to go in, I'm going to go in. Let's not do it half-arsed.'"

To understand these songs, we need to go back to 2016. The band were promoting their fourth album, *Earthbound*, which had put them back on the radar for many metal fans and on tour with Parkway Drive and Architects. But behind the scenes, Dani was struggling. "[During] the *Earthbound* cycle, I was my most unwell," he says. "[I was] quite severely depressed. Anxious going beyond just being anxious, to panic and crisis. I wouldn't say I was suicidal, but if it had carried on the way it was going…

Dani's bandmates now have a greater understanding of what he's been through

I don't know. I could not have carried on with the feelings and emotions I was going through for a long time."

At his lowest ebb, Dani turned things around. He was eventually diagnosed with chronic depression and generalised anxiety disorder. In 2017, he began taking medication and practising wellness techniques such as meditation, which have had a transformative effect. "Getting well" he says, was what triggered him to put pen to paper for *Cannibal*, and he hopes his honesty on tracks such as *The Grey (VIXI)* and *Better Below* will encourage a conversation and tear down the stigma around mental health.

"[*The Grey*] is a sad song," he says wryly. "It's the feeling of hopelessness and being on the precipice of an abyss, feeling like you could fall off. There's something so fragile and honest about that song that's different to the rest of the album. We played it on [our 2019] tour, two days before we released it, and it was savage. I've never connected with a crowd like it in my life. People sung it, cried it, shouted it."

Over the last few years, there's no doubt that mental health has featured increasingly in the social conversation, but there's a concern that 'It's OK not to be OK' is the new 'Thoughts and prayers' – a hollow gesture that barely engages with, never mind solves, the problem. "I'm sick and tired of seeing tweets saying we should talk about mental health and then people close off the doors the minute they say it," says Dani. "A lot of celebrities out there are capitalising. Promoting a positive message is always great. But by sending a tweet, I felt like I was getting to the point of negligence."

Dani wanted to go further. As well as penning the tracks on *Cannibal*, during Bury Tomorrow's 2019 tour,

"I HID MY DARKEST MOMENTS"

DANI WINTER-BATES

Dani used his platform on social media to arrange safe space sessions – seven workshops offering people free advice on mindfulness and meditation with clinical practitioners present. "Someone came out as gay for the first time," he says. "Someone came out as gender fluid. Two people talked about cases of abuse that they had never spoken about in their entire lives. It was powerful and emotive."

Although he's just written his most difficult album to date, the Dani we meet today is clearly in a good place. Recently promoted in his day job as an NHS Service Improvement Manager at Southampton's University Hospital, he looks healthy, happy and positive about the future. Then again, while *Cannibal* sounds and feels like an album about suffering, really it's about strength, about taking control. Produced by Sikth guitarist and *Black Flame* producer Dan Weller (Enter Shikari, Young Guns), and mixed/mastered by Adam 'Nolly' Getgood and Ermin Hamidovic, the dream team behind Architects' *Holy Hell*, despite its dark subject matter, it's a great metalcore record and Bury Tomorrow's most anthemic, accomplished album yet.

"We want to get bigger; we want to be headlining festivals!" enthuses Dani when we suggest that Brixton and beyond, the path taken recently by Architects and Parkway Drive, must be next on the agenda. "I want to be the first person to play Wembley and go and meet our fans after we play and stand at the merch for three hours."

While *Cannibal* is certainly set to boot the band up to the next level, there's a wider trend within metalcore of bands evolving into something bigger once they reach a certain point – take Parkway's swerve into fire-breathing stadium metal and the technical undercurrents that littered Architects' later work. Do Bury Tomorrow think they can reach the same heights sticking rigidly to the same metalcore sound they've had since day one?

"At 14 years, six albums in, it'd be a bit rich now for us to say, 'You know what? We're going to revolutionise ourselves and change,'" says Dani firmly. "We got into this because we were all unified fans of this kind of music. We loved Killswitch, As I Lay Dying, Darkest Hour, At The Gates, Unearth. They were our bands. Now we've got bands coming up, emulating *our* sound, why would we turn our back on it? I think we'll push ourselves to be better musicians, but I don't think we'll abandon our style, because we have thousands of fans around the world who love our music for what it is. I'm not afraid of changing music but it's not the right place for it."

"CELEBRITIES ARE CAPITALISING ON MENTAL HEALTH"

DANI WINTER-BATES

There are few bands in our world who have played the long game with as much drive, grit and determination as Bury Tomorrow. And with *Cannibal* in the bag, and big dreams in their mind's eye, it feels as though the graft is about to pay off. This summer, the band are set to play the main stage at Bloodstock Festival, a vastly different audience to what they're used to. How do they think they're going to go down in front of all the corpsepainted Behemoth fans?

"Yeah, we're a great Download, Slam Dunk, Reading and Leeds band," says Dani, smiling. "But I'm not afraid of anything in this world – only myself and my brain. Behemoth are one of the heaviest bands out there, but it doesn't mean when you hear us crush into a breakdown, or play [*Cannibal* opener] *Choke* live, you're going to think we're not a heavy metal band. It's putting us in front of people who arguably would never have seen our band before, and now we have an opportunity to pack them into Wembley when we end up playing there!"

CANNIBAL IS OUT ON APRIL 3 VIA MUSIC FOR NATIONS/ SONY MUSIC

Bury Tomorrow (left to right): Davyd Winter-Bates, Jason Cameron, Dani Winter-Bates, Kristan Dawson, Adam Jackson

THE DREAM TEAM

Producer Dan Weller and mixing/mastering genius Adam 'Nolly' Getgood take us inside the making of *Cannibal*

HOW DID WORKING ON CANNIBAL DIFFER FROM *BLACK FLAME*?
Dan Weller (producer): "We felt like *Black Flame* defined the band but we wanted less electronics on the new album. *Black Flame* has been popular, but I think we all agreed we didn't want to go any further down that route. We wanted to rip it back to big riffs."

DID YOU DO ANYTHING IN THE STUDIO TO MAKE THE BAND OPEN UP OR GET CREATIVE?
Dan: "As Dani's got older, he's become more comfortable excavating all the deep stuff inside his head. I don't tend to get involved with his lyrics at all. He's such a pro, he gets in front of the mic and nails it. He's lucky, a lot of vocalists will do a bunch of takes and then they'll need to go and lie down."

THE BAND REWORKED SOME OF THE SONGS IN THE STUDIO – WHY?
Dan: "Originally *Cannibal* had a completely different chorus line and melody and we ripped it out and changed it. We had one we liked, but it just wasn't popping. We were having a cup of tea in the garden and Jason [Cameron, clean singer and guitarist] came up with something. I was like, 'That's right, let's go back in', and we tracked it."

YOU WORKED ON ARCHITECTS' *HOLY HELL*. DO YOU THINK *CANNIBAL* CAN DO FOR BURY TOMORROW WHAT THAT ALBUM DID FOR ARCHITECTS?
Adam 'Nolly' Getgood (mixer): "What Bury Tomorrow have got are the big singing choruses, but they've still managed to keep the heavier riffs in there. That first riff that hits you on the record is awesome. I can imagine all this material going down an absolute storm in bigger venues. It's a different crowd from Architects, but I think they could be just as big."

split personality

Armed with a tweaked line-up and a shitkickingly great new album, Kvelertak are on a roll again. We nipped over to Norway to find out how they reinvented themselves

WORDS: MERLIN ALDERSLADE • PICTURES: JAKE OWENS

Six nondescript, tattooed lads from Norway's fourth largest city start a band that a) play a mutant hybrid of black metal and rock'n'roll, b) sing entirely in Norwegian and c) have a weird obsession with owls. Just what part of that equation screams 'SUCCESS STORY!' to you?

"We were just kids!" grins Kvelertak guitarist Maciek Ofstad as we chat in a cafe in Oslo, 10 years after the Stavanger quintet unleashed a debut that would turn the metal scene inside out. "I was 22 years old, and I had no idea what to expect from this band. We released that album not knowing that it was gonna change the world of metal forever, you know?"

There's a mischievous glint in Maciek's eye as he says this – you suspect his tongue may be planted just a little inside his cheek – but he has a point. While other bands had amplified black metal's rockier side over the years ("Satyricon tried to do it their way back in the day," Maciek points out), few managed to do so with such a raucous, infectious sense of *fun*. *Kvelertak* wasn't just a great album: it sparked interest in a different kind of heavy music that was emerging from Norway. Suddenly, everyone wanted a bit of catchy rock'n'roll with their icy tremolos.

"Suddenly, that [kind of music] was normal…" agrees Maciek, before busting out another grin, "…but we actually perfected it." What followed was a whirlwind experience for the youngsters. *Kvelertak* went gold in their home country, shifting more than 15,000 copies. They even bagged a Spellemann, AKA a Norwegian Grammy. And, in the space of just a few years, they went from playing toilet venues in their homeland to supporting the likes of Gojira and Mastodon around the world, receiving patronage from James Hetfield, and playing to 22,000 people at Oslo's Telenor Arena as special guests to Foo Fighters.

Two more albums followed – 2013's solid *Meir* and 2016's surprising *Nattesferd*, which upped Kvelertak's softer sensibilities with sprinklings of plodding, Status Quo-esque dad rock ("that was the Blue Öyster Cult era," jokes Maciek today). Still, things were moving in the right direction, with two stints supporting Metallica across Europe in 2017 and 2018 set to be a crowning achievement for a band that had long defied all reasonable expectations. Except, a spanner was about to be thrown into the works.

"We knew that Erlend [Hjelvik] was gonna leave during that tour," Maciek says of their now ex-frontman, who would depart Kvelertak soon after the

Kvelertak (left to right): Håvard Takle Ohr, Maciek Ofstad, Ivar Nikolaisen (front), Marvin Nygaard, Vidar Landa, Bjarte Lund Rolland

Owl obsession: life's a hoot in Kvelertak (below)

Kvelertak's "excessive touring" doesn't suit everyone... but it makes for killer shows

Metallica dates wrapped up. "At least, he had expressed his feelings. He wanted his life to go a different way than how it did with the band. And that's natural. Being in a touring band – *excessive* touring – for 10 years isn't for everyone. He wanted to go another way. But we didn't want to quit. We were like, 'Holy shit, we're playing these rooms, we're friends with Metallica now...'"

Erlend was a much-loved presence on stage, and for a band who had prided themselves on creating a killer live show, Kvelertak knew that whoever replaced their singer had to fit quickly and seamlessly into their mould. Luckily, they happened to have just the chap in mind. Enter: Ivar Nikolaisen.

"I was just living in a gypsy camp up in the forests up North," chuckles the skinny, long-haired gutterpunk currently sitting with us. "They just called me and asked me if I wanted to join the band. It was three days before a show!"

"Erlend quit on a Monday, and on the Friday we had a show," explains Maciek. "We were already on the Metallica tour when Erlend first expressed his feelings about quitting. The rest of us had a band meeting, and there was just one name who could do it. It was either Ivar or nobody."

So what if Ivar had said no?

"We would be fucked!" chortles the guitarist. "We would do an instrumental album..."

If Erlend's departure came as a surprise, Ivar's anointment as his successor makes all the sense in the world. Not only is he a seasoned face on the Norwegian metal scene, but he's well-versed in the kind of frenetic, rock'n'roll energy that is demanded of Kvelertak both in the studio and on a stage, having fronted (among others) Hadeland speed-rockers The Good The Bad And The Zugly. Not only that, but he's actually contributed to Kvelertak's music already, making a guest appearance on debut album breakout track, *Blodtørst*. It all meant that a potentially big ol' bump in the road was driven straight over. Ivar was announced as Kvelertak's newest member at a show in Flekkefjord on July 20, 2018, and would spend the following year settling in by way of live shows across Europe. Then, it was finally time to think about new music.

"WE DIDN'T KNOW WE WERE GONNA CHANGE METAL FOREVER"

MACIEK OFSTAD

Returning to Massachusetts' Godcity Studios with producer Kurt Ballou – a key ingredient of their first two albums – Kvelertak set about creating their fourth LP. Despite having previously switched things up by bringing in Nick Terry to produce *Nattesferd*, the band felt that the new songs they had written together better fitted Kurt's style – and, beyond that, they were keen to conjure some familiarity after the line-up change.

"We knew that the songs were gonna fit his sound, so we really wanted to go back with Kurt," explains Maciek. "And there had been so much shit for the last couple of years, that to go into a studio with someone you don't know and have one more uncertainty in a process...

we changed singer, we changed drummer [Kjetil Gjermundrød jumped ship last year, replaced by Håvard Takle Ohr], we don't really need to change the sound right now. Kurt knows what works with us really well, and he's very strict. We needed an adult!"

The results speak for themselves. *Splid* (that's 'Discord' in English) is a fantastic record – by far the best thing Kvelertak have put their name to since their debut. It packs the freewheeling intensity of that first album but peppers it with a ton of expansive left-turns and bursts of experimentation that mould their sound into scintillating new forms. At just under an hour, it's their longest album yet, but it evolves and twists so often that it never drags. Oh, and there are also two songs sung in English – the galloping, Maiden harmonies-hued 'title track' *Discord*, and the deliriously catchy *Crack Of Doom*, featuring Mastodon's Troy Sanders. What's that all about then, fellas? Songs in English? Making a cynical stab at appealing to bigger markets, are we?

"Absolutely not!" insists Maciek. "Ivar's played in a million bands where he's always sung in English, so that's always going to be natural for him."

"We wanted to have the whole album in English," adds Ivar, laughing, "but the thing is, I put all the words I knew in English into two songs, and I didn't have any more!"

He looks at Maciek and feigns confusion before the two break down into guffaws. "I didn't! I didn't know any more!"

Despite their insistence that the English lyrics are a natural part of the process, both Maciek and Ivar know that some pockets of the Internet have greeted the move a little cynically.

"I've been reading YouTube comments for 10 years," Maciek sighs. [They used to say] 'Why never English? I can never understand these motherfuckers.' Now we finally have a song in English, what do they write? 'Ah, these motherfuckers are singing in English?! Fuck you guys!'"

"I heard some people complain that we were 'sell-outs' for doing two songs in English, and also that we have some melodic, singing parts," groans Ivar. "Is it selling out to have songs that are almost 10 minutes long?!"

Ivar the gypsy gutterpunk has settled in beautifully

What certainly does feel sold out is the gig that Kvelertak play later that night. A special album launch event put on for select media and competition winners, it takes place in a 400-capacity venue under the very cafe we were sitting in earlier. Despite temperatures outside dipping below freezing, it is packed to the rafters and *toasty* in here. It's a purposefully intimate show designed to show off the new material, and the seven tracks aired from *Splid* all sound colossal. *Crack Of Doom* draws a huge response and already sounds like a song that should stay in Kvelertak setlists forever, while the eight-minute *Fanden Ta Dette Hull!* might just be the band's pièce de résistance – a rumbling, sprawling masterpiece complete with a thrash metal midsection that would give Overkill whiplash.

Ivar is a noticeably different stage presence from his predecessor – more rock'n'roll showman than head-down headbanger – but he looks well at home and his stage patter is warmly received (or at least we assume – our Norwegian is a little rusty, but everyone definitely looks like they're having a lovely time).

"PEOPLE ARE CALLING US 'SELL-OUTS'"
IVAR NIKOLAISEN

It's a rowdy, loud and breathless 16-song set with a clear message: Kvelertak still have plenty to offer the scene they so heavily affected a decade ago, and they are absolutely not going anywhere. That they're still here 10 years on and still smashing stages to bits is surely proof enough of that.

"The first tour we ever did was with Converge and Kylesa," recalls Maciek later. "We drank all of the beer in their fridge. We had *no* tour etiquette. Kylesa had to say to us, 'Hey guys, you're the shit band on the tour, you can't drink all the beers. It's for us.' Ha ha ha! Now, we finally have our own fridge."

So there we are. Ten years after blowing our minds for the first time, Kvelertak have a fridge, a Norwegian Grammy and four albums under their belts. Oh, and they weren't kidding when they said they're, like, total besties with Metallica.

"Yes, I have Lars's number," laughs Maciek when we prod him on that particular point. "I texted him on his birthday and got a 'Thanks, man! Hope things are rocking. L.' I checked that message a couple of times before I sent it!"

And what next? What else do six lads from Norway's fourth biggest city have left to tick off the bucketlist?

"Next year we're gonna get another Spellemann – at least one!" muses Ivar. "They promised me that when I join the band we're gonna get 18. So if we don't, I quit."

"We need to fly over to *America* to get a Grammy, then we can call it a day," argues Maciek, before pausing a moment, that mischievous look creeping back onto his face. "Actually, no. I think we'll keep on doing this for 30 more years." H

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Where the magic happens

Coming together again after 15 years, power metal supergroup Demons & Wizards have written an album for the ages. What took them so long?

WORDS: DOM LAWSON • PICTURES: TIM TRONCKOE

DEMONS & WIZARDS

Time flies when you're busy conquering the world. Two of power metal's most revered and iconic figures, Blind Guardian frontman Hansi Kürsch and Iced Earth guitarist Jon Schaffer are both notoriously focused and hard-working. Over the last 20 years, both their bands have risen from cult acclaim to something approaching legendary status, with relentless touring and a steady stream of celebrated new music all part of the plan. They've also been trying to make music together, as Demons & Wizards. Finally, after 15 long years, they have a new album to share with us – and it's seriously epic.

A collaboration that sent power metal fans into a state of frothing anticipation when it was first announced in the late 90s, Demons & Wizards brought Hansi's extraordinary vocal talents together with Jon's peerless guitar work and songwriting smarts. The results were stunning: both the duo's self-titled debut (2000) and its bigger, bolder follow-up, *Touched By The Crimson King* (2005), were rapturously received, particularly in Blind Guardian and Iced Earth's central European strongholds. The biggest surprise about D&W was that these two major talents were so easily able to write songs together, with no clashing of egos or toes being trodden on. As Jon Schaffer tells *Hammer*, Demons & Wizards was a band borne of friendship, first and foremost.

"It goes back to Iced Earth's first European tour in the early 90s," he notes. "We were main support to Blind Guardian. Hansi and I were living on a bus together, and we just bonded instantly. We had an amazing tour. Hansi and I were doing lots of partying and we were pretty much always the last ones to bed, up all night talking and stuff… and several years after that, we discovered we could write songs together."

"That was in 1997 and Jon was visiting me in Germany," adds Hansi. "We ended up in a pub, having a party with all the Blind Guardian guys. We went back to my house and went to bed, heavily drunk, and we woke up the next day with terrible headaches! Ha ha! But Jon just picked up one of the guitars in my house and started playing. I thought it was probably something from Iced Earth, but I liked it and I had a melody in mind. Very soon, we had a song."

That song would turn out to be *My Last Sunrise*, one of the grandiose highlights of the first Demons & Wizards album. With both their bands doing well, this was a side-project with a ready-made fanbase, and when *Demons & Wizards* was finally unveiled in February 2000, it was an undeniably big deal. As Jon notes today, it was a creative match made in heaven and everything just *clicked*.

"It worked smoothly from the start. We were so simpatico anyway, and we always have been, since we first met. It was like, 'Wow, not only are we really good friends, but we can actually do something really creative and cool together.' Having a friendship for seven years and then suddenly there's a whole new level to our relationship? That was really cool."

It's a good problem to have, but both Blind Guardian and Iced Earth have had full schedules over the last 20 years. As a result, the delay between *Touched By The Crimson King* and the new album – aptly named *III* – is easily explained: Hansi and Jon's schedules simply didn't match up frequently or well enough to facilitate the making of another album. Hansi even notes that due to being absurdly busy, he didn't really notice that so much time had passed. When they did reconvene to begin work on their third record, both men were determined to make it count.

"We really started talking about it again in 2016 and Jon came to see me when Blind Guardian was touring the US," says Hansi. "But shortly after, the work began on [Iced Earth's 2017 album] *Incorruptible* and for me the work on *Legacy* [*…Of The Dark Lands*, Blind Guardian's 2019 orchestral double album] started. I tasted a little blood when Jon sent me three songs and said, 'If you feel they are suitable and you're comfortable finding melodies for them, this could be the start…' That was the first moment when I really got the hunger for Demons & Wizards again. But even then I had to wait another two years! Ha ha ha!"

"We were both still juggling lots of things during the whole process, but I think we achieved our goals at a high level," states Jon. "I think the fans are going to be super-happy. You can hear on the records that we're having a good time. We can do whatever the fuck we want. We don't have to do this. We do it because we enjoy it. We had a killer time making the record, even though it was intense. We laughed a lot!"

As Guns N' Roses fans will confirm, waiting 15 years for a new album doesn't always end well. Fortunately, Hansi Kürsch and Jon Schaffer are hardly the kind of men to lose the plot during the creative process, and their new album delivers on every level. Although instantly recognisable as the duo's work, it's also a much more ambitious, diverse and immersive affair than its two forebears, with inspired forays into progressive and classic rock alongside the more mind-blowing vocal harmonies (Hansi!) and ultra-precise steroidal-thrash riffing (Jon!). From the epic, eight-minute assault of opener *Diabolic* and the pitch-perfect metal melodrama of *Wolves In Winter*, through to the AC/DC-saluting *Midas Disease* and opulent, proggy closer *Children Of Cain*, it confirms that time has not dimmed its creators' chemistry one bit.

"This *had* to be something special," says Jon. "Before it all started, I took a big hike out in the desert mountains in Arizona and just got my head clear, got recharged, came back, and then I went to Germany, me and Hansi had our meetings, and we set up the whole plan for this record. So I was super-inspired to write and in a good spot. I guess we both were! The stars aligned and it worked out perfect. With us, it's all instinct. Our original intention was to make a 45-minute record, but we ended up with about 65 minutes of music and neither of us felt there was *any* filler, so we just said 'Fuck it, let's put it all out…'"

Nineteen years after their last live performance as Demons & Wizards, Hansi and Kürsch took the unusual step of hitting the road *before* releasing a new album. They kicked off with a series of club and festival shows across Europe last summer, culminating in a barnstorming headline performance at Wacken Open Air, followed by their first-ever North American tour. Even though they hadn't released a minute of music in 15 years, Demons & Wizards were welcomed like heroes, by old and new fans alike.

"Oh, Wacken was the peak point, absolutely," enthuses Hansi. "Everything worked as scheduled, straight from the masterplan. I think we might even have gotten the biggest response at the whole festival! So that's something you wish for but you can't plan it. We did the work and prepared ourselves very well and it really paid off that day. We had the North American dates afterwards and that was a blast as well. It was the first time those people could see us onstage, and the passion and love for Demons & Wizards was almost tangible in every room."

"Yeah, there were grown men crying in the audience," chuckles Jon. "I felt like, 'Whoa, easy dude!' Ha ha ha! But it was all ages, too. A lot of young kids, a lot of people our age and then everything in between."

"That's the great thing about this band" Hansi concludes. "It attracts people of all ages… and all genders! We are a band that really appreciates seeing girls in the audience, and there were definitely *some*! Ha ha!"

As they have already finished their world tour, Demons & Wizards will not be hitting the road in support of *III*. Instead, Hansi and Jon will return to their day jobs, beginning work on new Blind Guardian and Iced Earth albums and bracing themselves for new campaigns. But with plenty of fire for D&W in their bellies, fans that missed out on seeing the band *this* time around almost certainly have something to look forward to. It might take some working out, but this imperious double act are having too much fun to stop now.

"It might be in 2021 or 2022, we just got to figure it out, but we're definitely planning to do more shows," Jon avows. "As far as more new material goes, we'll have to take it one step at a time. But when we do a live production in the future, incorporating all these killer new songs from *III* and still delving into the past, we've got to have a stage show that *matches* that. It's all about theatre and taking this whole thing to another place and keeping it special. As long as it's fun, we'll keep doing it. And it's fun because we're friends."

> **"I TASTED A LITTLE BLOOD AND GOT THE HUNGER AGAIN"**
> HANSI KÜRSCH

***III* IS OUT NOW VIA CENTURY MEDIA**

Jon Schaffer and Hansi Kürsch: brothers from another mother

Iced Earth VS Blind Guardian

We asked Jon and Hansi to pick their favourite song by each other's band

MY FAVOURITE BLIND GUARDIAN SONG
Welcome To Dying
(*Tales From The Twilight World*, 1990)

Jon Schaffer: "I have magical memories of us first meeting each other and all the fun we had, so if I put on *Tales From The Twilight World* or [follow-up album] *Somewhere Far Beyond*, it immediately transports me back to those days and I remember the smells of the backstage in 1992 and wherever the fuck we were at and god knows what was going on! Ha ha! So even though there are better Blind Guardian songs, I'd have to go for *Welcome To Dying*, because it reminds me of that first tour in Europe. Whenever Hansi and I do stuff together on tour, I always want to play that one. It's just ripping, fast rhythm guitar stuff and I love that."

MY FAVOURITE ICED EARTH SONG
A Question Of Heaven
(*The Dark Saga*, 1996)

Hansi Kürsch: "I really love *A Question Of Heaven* the most. It's a very dramatic song. It goes through all the emotions. It has that whole *Jesus Christ Superstar* approach; it's so epic and almost theatrical. Matt Barlow [Iced Earth's singer at the time of *The Dark Saga*] delivers a really crazy vocal performance on this song, it's truly amazing. Blind Guardian is more of a fantasy storytelling kind of band, whereas Iced Earth has that demonic storytelling style and a more evil sound. But *A Question Of Heaven* has many different moods, and for me personally, that's when Iced Earth are always at their best."

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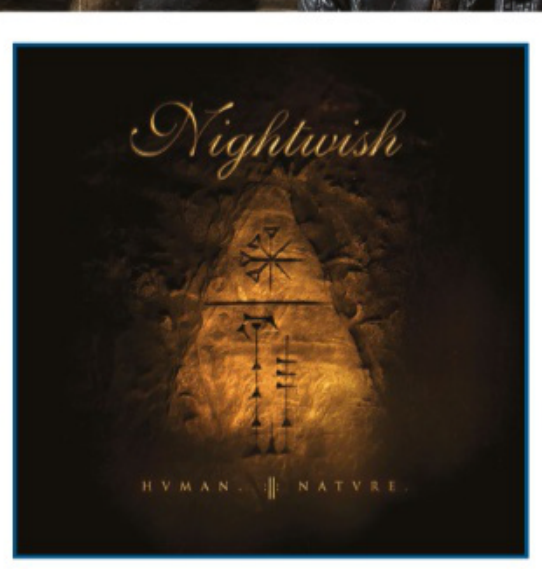
EDITED BY: JONATHAN SELZER • PICTURE: MATTHIAS MATTIES

NIGHTWISH

Human. :II: Nature.

NUCLEAR BLAST

Finland's symphonic behemoths let their ambition run wild



NIGHTWISH'S NINTH ALBUM is a formidable double-headed hydra: one part gargantuan symphonic metal album, one part balls-to-the-wall orchestra-standard instrumentals. It puts their talents to every test going, and they emerge utterly victorious. Exploring a multitude of themes relating to humanity and nature, *Human. :II: Nature.* expands the richly produced sound of 2015's *Endless Forms Most Beautiful* into new, spellbinding territories with a few scattered homages to their illustrious 24-year career. The surreal symphony of *Music* retraces *Nemo*-esque vibes, the punchy industrial energy of *Planet Hell* echoes amidst *Noise* and the contagious roots of *Wish I Had An Angel* seep through the humongous *Pan* – a full-on theatrical performance from the first note that seamlessly shapeshifts between a storming chorus, heavy chugging riffs and Floor's glittering vocals.

"NIGHTWISH HAVE LET LOOSE INTO VAST ATMOSPHERIC WORLDS"

The initially unassuming music box tinkling on *Shoemaker* soon bursts into their trademark towering instrumentals and a gorgeous operatic sequence. *Harvest* may not address the most metal topic, but its hearty folk adventure is every bit as enthralling as you could hope. *How's The Heart?* is the album's standout, a fresh singalong number pitting Floor Jansen's stunning range against the flawless drums of new permanent member Kai Hahto.

No sooner has *Procession* dished out its own heavenly brand of chills like candy thanks to a terrific performance from mastermind Tuomas Holopainen, the phenomenally menacing *Tribal* flips proceedings on their head with enough energy to charge a circle-pit of seriously epic proportions. In similar devastating fashion, disc one closes on the seven-minute *Endlessness*, a cinematic treat

PRESS/TINA KORHONEN

Nightwish haven't been lounging around since *Endless Forms...*

that comes armed with enticing solos and compelling orchestral sequences. So far, so effortlessly Nightwish.

The second disc, *All The Works Of Nature Which Adorn The World*, is a philharmonic feat everybody knew Nightwish were capable of producing. It was simply a matter of time until they unleashed their boundless talents on record. Masterfully embodying elemental concepts such as the sprawling *Moors* and the angelic *Aurorae*, this instrumental second part lets the Finns loose into vast atmospheric worlds of their own design. The soothing notes of *Vista*, with its swirling cellos and ethereal harps, could well be the soundtrack to an idyll akin to *Lord Of The Rings*' Rivendell.

Lulling waves of violins crash around *The Blue*'s oceanic serenity, a relaxing classical therapy bleeding into the booming urgency of *The Green*, and *Anthropocene* journeys through human history beginning with the *Hurrian Hymn To Nikkal*, an ancient Syrian prayer considered the oldest known piece of music, before closing on the beautifully arranged *Ad Astra*.

Captivating from the onset, *Human. :II: Nature.* is a triumph for Nightwish and a treasure for fans who have lamented their absence from touring over the last two years in preparation for this challenging effort. The Finnish icons have poured every second of the five-year wait since *Endless Forms Most Beautiful* into crafting a consuming, turbulent and spectacular experience.

FOR FANS OF: Within Temptation, Epica, Delain

ALI COOPER

ALBUM REVIEWS

AD INFINITUM
Chapter I: Monarchy
NAPALM

Swiss symphonic metallers bring history to the boil

Compelling, elegant theatrics abound on this debut effort – a punchy symphonic metal gift for history geeks. From the haunting *Infected Monarchy* to the palatial *Marching On Versailles*, Melissa Bonny instantly establishes her authority with a truly stunning vocal range delivering songs inspired by the black death. Axeman Adrian Theßenvitz wields a rapturous solo for *Maleficent*, a frenetic drum display drives *I Am The Storm* and a gorgeous storytelling turn emerges through *Fire And Ice*. Purpose-built for a live setting, *Live Before You Die* brings a crowd-rousing energy neatly emphasised by the sassy *Revenge*. With heavenly vocals flanked by glittering riffs throughout, Ad Infinitum have made a confident start to an undoubtedly bright future.

FOR FANS OF: Nightwish, Amaranthe, Epica, Visions Of Atlantis

ALI COOPER

AFTERBIRTH
Four Dimensional Flesh
UNIQUE LEADER

Long Island slammers get bogged down in their brutality

Despite death metal's creative renaissance in recent years, this sophomore offering from Afterbirth is a rigid and largely uninspiring affair. While there are flashes of technical and experimental brilliance, such as the Fallujah-esque atmospherics of *Spiritually Transmitted Disease* or the instrumental pieces that allow the guitar work to truly shine, the album as a whole suffers from a severe lack of memorability. Predictable passages of stereotypical slam and monotonous vocals detract from the impact. Sure, it's an explosive listen, but the subgenre has evolved far beyond just being brutal for brutal's sake.

FOR FANS OF: Artificial Brain, Fallujah, Gorguts

JAMES WEAVER

AUGUST BURNS RED
Guardians
FEARLESS

Pennsylvania's metalcore veterans still firing on all cylinders

After 18 years and two Grammy nominations, August Burns Red are still finding ways to expand and embellish metalcore's well-trodden template. Almost every track here is a beast, underpinned by frenetic technicality, with the band wringing both nostalgia and new ideas out of choruses and riffs as easily as squeezing out a sponge. Their ninth album relentlessly switches up the pace and tone. *Defender* slams with not one, but two brutal breakdowns and, while the band hit the lugs like a tsunami with a huge melodic guitar lead and chorus on *Bones*, they find themselves enveloped by hypnotic, post-metal murk on *Lighthouse* moments later. August Burns Red sound as impassioned and energised as ever.

FOR FANS OF: Parkway Drive, The Ghost Inside, After The Burial

DANNII LEIVERS

The Black Dahlia Murder promise a rabbit-punch to the senses

THE BLACK DAHLIA MURDER

Verminous

METAL BLADE

Michigan's death metal mob hit a new, bloodstained high

IN THE 19 years since The Black Dahlia Murder's formation, the Michigan crew have grown to become one of extreme metal's most respected bands, bolstered by a back catalogue so strong that any hint of a new album is welcomed with high anticipation. The success of 2017's *Nightbringers* pushed expectations even higher, but this merely served to fuel the band's fire, because 10th album *Verminous* is even better than its predecessor.

The opening title tracks sets out the album's stall with a barrage of riffs, blastbeats and savage vocals from the near-infallible Trevor Strnad; it's classic Black Dahlia Murder and a welcome punch to the senses. Where the album really makes its mark, though, are the melodies and tempo changes, meaning songs like *Sunless Empire* and *Removal Of The Oaken Stake* morph into massive anthems that are bound to get fists pumping and bodies moving. This doesn't mean there's less of the aggression that made TBDM so revered, mind you; *The Wereworm's Feast* is a slab of death metal so meaty it could feed a family of four for a month and *The Leather Apron's Scorn* simply crushes with ease. It's the final track, *Dawn Of Rats*, however, that resonates loudest, bringing elements from the rest of the album together into one neat, four-minute package that ranks among the best songs the band have ever written.

If festival slots were based on the consistency of releases, The Black Dahlia Murder would have headlined Download moons ago. *Verminous* doesn't just uphold their quality control; it represents a band who are still evolving, possibly yet to reach their creative zenith. If that's the case, whatever comes next has the potential to be nothing short of completely mindblowing. Until then, this is still absolutely excellent.

FOR FANS OF: Job For A Cowboy, Whitechapel, Decapitated

ELLIOT LEAVER

AZUSA

Loop Of Yesterdays

SOLID STATE

Dillinger and Extol members weave new spells of jazz/tech wonder

After 2018's unusual and promising debut, *Heavy Yoke*, this one part ex-Dillinger Escape Plan, two parts ex-Extol project returns. *Loop Of Yesterdays* is again defined by vocalist Eleni Zafiriadou, who's able to spin on a sixpence between wistful and ethereal and guttural and scabrous depending on the mood of the music. The gorgeous title track carries shades of Massive Attack, yet when they dip into the jazzy tech-metal the members are so skilled in, such as on the Meshuggah-aping grind of *Detach*, Azusa can easily compete in the ferocity stakes. Their breadth of dynamics is already hugely impressive. If they continue to evolve at this pace their reach could be stratospheric.

FOR FANS OF: Gojira, Oathbreaker, Myrkur

STEPHEN HILL

BEGGAR

Compelled To Repeat

APF

London-based sludge four-piece go beyond the norm

From opener *Blood Moon* it's apparent that Beggar offer a little more than standard-issue sludge. The track's dramatic intro gives way to a swinging head-nodder of a riff as drummer Bertrand Sautier's cymbals crash maniacally and a brief pastoral moment materialises like an oasis amid armageddon. Beggar have clearly put a lot of time and thought into building around their impressive riffage. The contorted stop-start riffs of *Black Cloud* indicate a progressive impulse later explored via the 10-minute epic *Matryoshka Brain*. Charlie Davis's rasping vocals are a treat too, sounding particularly unhinged on *Anaesthete*, where he sounds like the demonic offspring of The God Of Hellfire, aka Arthur Brown.

FOR FANS OF: Eyehategod, Charger, Iron Monkey

JOSEPH STANNARD

BENIGHTED

Obscene Repressed

SEASON OF MIST

Saint-Etienne's most brutal let the violence flow

So remorselessly brutal that it's frequently laugh-out-loud funny, Benighted's visceral deathgrind formula is virtually without peer. As with everything the Frenchmen have released, *Obscene Repressed* brings the hammer down at an insane pace, delivering jolting dose after dose of technically precise but thrillingly knuckle-headed extremity. The reason why the likes of *Brutus* and *The Starving Beast* are so sonically injurious could simply be that Benighted are genuine psychopaths. It certainly sounds like it, as they tear through something as stripped down and nails-hard as *Smoke Through The Skull* or the oppressive, staccato blast-blizzard of *Casual Piece Of Meat*. An insane cover of Slipknot's *Get This* is a welcome treat, too. A bone-shattering kicking worth receiving.

FOR FANS OF: Aborted, Decapitated, Implore

DOM LAWSON

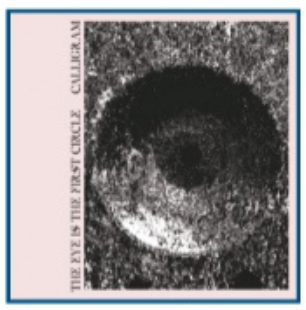
CABAL
Drag Me Down
LONG BRANCH

Danish tech-brutalists make friends in high places

Cabal are one of Denmark's most promising new metal bands. Their debut album, *Mark Of Rot*, turned plenty of heads from fans of techy-deathy-blackened noise, and the follow-up is, well… more of the same, really. That will doubtless be music to the ears of those who like their metal as meat'n'potato-based as possible, but the lack of innovation, new ideas and progression might not do much to tempt in the more broadminded metal fan. You can't really knock Cabal too much when songs like *Tongues* would kick your teeth all the way down your throat with ease, and having Matt Heafy turn up on the far more epic-sounding *Bitter Friend* – by some stretch the most interesting track here – is quite a coup. But, that aside, Cabal aren't quite doing enough to stand out from the crowd here.

FOR FANS OF: Slaughter To Prevail, Thy Art Is Murder, Black Tongue

STEPHEN HILL



CALLIGRAM
The Eye Is The First Circle
PROSTHETIC

International ragers set the black metal/hardcore faultlines aflame

Calligram have been setting the underground aflame since their first EP, 2016's *Demimonde*, while laying the foundations for this, their debut full-length: a whip-smart amalgamation of black metal and post-hardcore. Matteo Rizzardo's vocals are sung entirely in Italian, yet his viewpoint comes across succinctly in deep guttural roars and screams that cut to the core, and as such, this international group (from Italy, the UK, Brazil and France) create music that transcends language. The emotion is felt keenly through harsh wails and slicing guitars rather than an understanding of what is said. Opener *Carne* is driven by a filthy guitar line while *Serpe* inserts classic black metal riffing to deadly effect. *The Eye Is The First Circle* is a genuinely exciting record that deserves to push Calligram to the foreground of the blackened metal scene.

FOR FANS OF: Downfall Of Gaia, The Secret, Hexis

CHERYL CARTER

CORDYCEPS
Betrayal
UNIQUE LEADER

Las Vegas-based slammers look to spread the infection

Named after a parasitic fungus that preys on insects' brains and turns them into zombie spore-spreaders, Cordyceps' brutal moniker takes a little bit of effort to understand compared to their more bluntly named peers. But their sinister mid-paced slam is not so subtle, delivering all the necessary guttural vocals, ugly drops and frenzied drumming to make this a debut of note. However, in comparison to the more sludgy sound of their contemporaries, the crisp production here brings the snare and cymbals to the fore, allowing the old-school riffs of the title track and blackened breakdowns on *Maelstrom Of Hypocrisy* a little bit more room to breathe. *Cesspool Of The Vicious* delivers on its title with malicious riffs, while the fiddly interplay of *Parasitic Degenerate* and *Comatose Subservient* also have nefarious atmospheres to match the necessary raucous tick list. *Betrayal* is another disgusting and visceral addition to the burgeoning brutal death metal roster.

FOR FANS OF: Disentomb, Ingested, Vulvodynia

ADAM REES

JIM DAVIES
Headwars
EXTREME MUSIC

Former Prodigy/Pitchshifter guitarist re-enters the mainframe

As guitarist for The Prodigy and Pitchshifter, Jim Davies was an instrumental component in the hybridisation of rock fury with electronic beats in the late 90s. *Headwars* is a throwback to those times albeit given a punchy, 21st-century production job and a widened influential palette from which to glean inspiration. Despite the instrument Davies is most known for, there are a couple of tracks that have a far stronger focus on pure electronica such as *Shadows* and *Game Of Faces*. Elsewhere *Zombies*, a diatribe against the ills of social media, evokes the sardonic attitude that JS Clayden would pepper Pitchshifter records with. It's unclear whether younger folk weaned on a diet of Code Orange or Bring Me The Horizon will take to this, but those nostalgic for the British metal/electronic crossover of the late 90s would do well to seek *Headwars* out.

FOR FANS OF: 3Teeth, Fear Factory, Pitchshifter

REMFRY DEDMAN

Bury Tomorrow prepare for a new dawn

BURY TOMORROW
Cannibal
MUSIC FOR NATIONS/SONY

South coast metalcore braves bring more melody to the mosh

BLACK FLAME WAS always going to be a hard act to follow for Southampton's metalcore brutes Bury Tomorrow. But where they raised the bar for themselves throughout that last blood-curdling record in 2018, *Cannibal* sets it ablaze. Album number six goes straight for the jugular from the off, arming the utterly visceral opener *Choke* with some of Adam Jackson's best drum work. *The Grey (VIXI)*'s spiralling melodics prove even more emotionally evocative when preceded by the band's ballsy title track – a neatly produced, defiant effort charged by glittering clean vocals.

While confrontational in all the right places, Bury Tomorrow's 2020 incarnation makes a marked lean further toward the melodic, exemplified by the heavenly tones of *Imposter* that stand as a phenomenal show of James Cameron's vocal range, *Better Below*'s smooth groove and *Quake's* ability to swirl through contemplative downturns and harmonious melodies with ease. In contrast, you can practically hear the circle-pits forming beneath *The Agonist*'s crushing riff that barges through, making way for Dani Winter-Bates' barbed vocals, with the frontman on blistering form from start to finish. Meanwhile, the slickly produced, otherworldly *Gods & Machines* makes a gorgeous contrast with the raw disarray of *Voice & Truth* that follows. Kristan Dawson's riffs throughout *Cold Sleep* are simply shattering, setting the stage for a terrifically chaotic closer in *Dark Infinite*, causing carnage by recklessly chucking blastbeats from all angles.

The sheer talent and artistic wisdom it takes to produce such a towering, jam-packed record nearly 15 years down the line proves why Bury Tomorrow are still such a formidable force in the metalcore realm today. Neatly balancing stunning melodies with teeth-clenching brutality throughout, they've made show-stopping metalcore look easy once again.

FOR FANS OF: WSS, In Hearts Wake, The Ghost Inside

ALI COOPER

Elephant Tree engage in some blue-sky thinking

ELEPHANT TREE

Habits

HOLY ROAR

Melancholy doom squad present their most expansive work yet

OVER SEVEN YEARS, two albums and a host of sweat-drenched, speaker-blowing live shows, London's Elephant Tree have carved out a very personal and distinctive niche amidst the UK's flourishing doom scene. Drawing tastefully from psychedelia, blues, prog rock and even pop, they've never compromised their nod-inducing heaviness. Without meaning to diminish any of the band's prior achievements, however, all of that now feels like a warm-up for *Habits*, easily their most cohesive and powerful statement to date.

This is apparent as soon as anthemic opener *Sails* roars out of your speakers, smashing together thick, weighty riffs with glistening, crystalline vocal melodies in a manner very reminiscent of Torche. It manages to sound impossibly, crushingly heavy while simultaneously feeling incredibly breezy and light on its feet, nailing that sweet spot between flattening amp-worship and ecstatic, summery pop euphoria. *Faceless* and *Bird* keep the same vibe while introducing huge, dreamy chords à la *Siamese Dream*-era Smashing Pumpkins, whereas *Wasted* and the absolutely beautiful, unexpectedly gentle centrepiece, *The Fall Chorus*, demonstrate just how strong, memorable and effective the band's shimmering vocal hooks have become.

Their lighter moments may feel more accessible than ever before, but riff addicts needn't worry about Elephant Tree losing their edge as *Habits* also contains some of the band's heaviest material to date. The mournful *Exit The Soul* pairs swampy bass tones against yearning guitar leads and emotive, forlorn melodies in a way that would make Pallbearer proud, and dynamic closer *Broken Nails* allows its truly haunting, folky vocal harmonies enough room to breathe before building to a gigantic, overwhelmingly sad crescendo.

Far from just another stoner doom album, *Habits* is a beautiful, heartfelt and powerful opus painted in rich, warm hues of both joy and sorrow, and is easily Elephant Tree's finest hour so far.

FOR FANS OF: Torche, Pallbearer, Low Flying Hawks

KEZ WHELAN

DISBELIEF

The Ground Collapses

LISTENABLE

Earth-shaking return from veteran German death/doom metallers

After a seven-year wait for 2017's *The Symbol Of Death*, Disbelief have been more prompt with album 11. Another assault of towering riffs shot through with melancholic melody, it's also a more accomplished affair with both guitarist David Renner and drummer Fabian Regmann having had more time to bed in. *Colder Than Ice* and the slowly building *Insane* are focal points for Renner's sombre leads, as Disbelief bombard the most extreme end of the melodic death scale. Karsten Jäger's vocals could cleave meat from bone, and *Soul Destructor* and *The Awakening* are songs to ascend summits to, while the pummelling double bass on *Depth Of Sorrow* ups the tempo with relish.

FOR FANS OF: Amon Amarth, Illdisposed, Dew-Scented

ADAM REES

DOOL

Summerland

PROPHECY PRODUCTIONS

Mystic Dutch rockers embark on an exquisite and inquisitive quest

Dutch quintet Dool impressed with their 2017 debut, *Here Now, There Then* – a darkling combination of hard rock and doom-lite elevated by the resounding power of vocalist Ryanne van Dorst. *Summerland*'s foreboding tolling of bells during the intro of *Sulphur & Starlight* tingles the spine, before Ryanne's spell-binding confidence holds sway amidst the hypnotic rhythms of *A Glass Forest*. *Be Your Sins* ups the energy with a classically galloping riff before its eight-minute closing pilgrimage, *Dust & Shadow*. The record is bolstered by Opeth's Per Wiberg providing layers of Hammond organ and the formidable backing vocals of Farida Lemouchi (ex-The Devil's Blood). Bold and searching, *Summerland* is the sound of a band who have found themselves.

FOR FANS OF: Lucifer, Jex Thoth, Hexvessel

TOM O'BOYLE

EARTH ROT

Black Tides Of Obscurity

SEASON OF MIST

Perth's black/death brutalists stick to the rulebook

When it comes to metal, Australia is a land of extremes. Bands seem to either be amazingly original (Caligula's Horse, Ne Obliviscaris, Karnivool), or generic loyalists clinging to sounds European bands outgrew 20 years ago. Earth Rot are the latter. On their third album, the blackened death metal crew still owe their identity to the likes of Belphegor and Abominator. Tremolo picking and unintelligible gargling always rule the roost here. There are some moments of originality, such as the more melodic guitar leads of *Towards A Godless Shrine*. But even those quickly lose steam as the track limps through its excessive five-and-a-half-minute run-time. Some more varied and succinct songwriting would do Earth Rot a world of good.

FOR FANS OF: Belphegor, Marduk, Thy Antichrist

MATT MILLS

FOOL'S GHOST
Dark Woven Light
PROSTHETIC

Mournful, spellbinding meditations for the restless of heart

Fool's Ghost are a unique proposition: a married duo, rooted in different musical styles, releasing a record of melancholic quietude on an extreme metal label. Guitarist Nick Thieneman's post-hardcore origins are worlds away from his wife Amber's jazz background, but their debut departs from both, proving heavier in emotional intent than in sheer musical heft. The album title is indicative of what's at work within; *Epilogue*'s mournful organ and solitary notes reverberate around Amber's rich soliloquy, and *Golden* is built around a sparse, pensive bassline. Like many of the tracks, *Touch*'s yearning flourishes gradually. Paradoxically, *Dark Woven Light* is haunting in its urgency. It's a desperate whisper whose exterior calm barely conceals interior turmoil. It's a record for restless nights, for those lying awake in search of hope.

FOR FANS OF: Emma Ruth Rundle, Big Brave, True Widow

TOM O'BOYLE

HEXVESSEL
Kindred
SVART

Finland's pagan folk-psych troupe delve back into the wilderness

Kindred is Hexvessel's second album in less than a year, following on from 2019's *All Tree*. Both mark a return to folkier, forest-dwelling climes after the shift to heavy, electrified grooves and Doors-esque psychedelia of 2016's *When We Are Death*. Opener *Billion-Year-Old Being* is part mellifluous folklore, part lysergic freak-out. Lead single *Demian* is a lazy blues ballad. The muted trumpet of *Bog Bodies* is the sound of smoke-filled speakeasys. An Englishman willingly lost in the Finnish wilderness, singer/songwriter Mat McNerney's rarefied earthen tones morph from whisper to tumult throughout the record, proving spell-binding on the harmonised séance that is closer *Joy Of Sacrifice*. Running just shy of 40 minutes, *Kindred* isn't Hexvessel's defining statement, but it is a wonderful place to hide; a gateway to a solemn, dreamlike realm that offers refuge from the vagaries of the everyday.

FOR FANS OF: King Dude, Wardruna, Darkher

TOM O'BOYLE

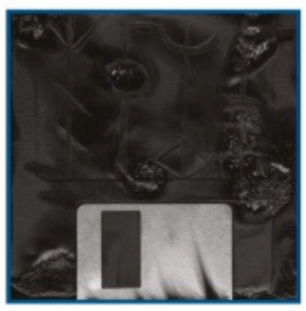
JARBOE
Illusory
CONSOULING SOUNDS

Former Swans vocalist reveals yet more sonic facets

With a career spanning more than three decades and an endless number of releases, listening to one of Jarboe's albums is like reading a page of her diary. On her 33rd solo effort, the dreamy *Illusory*, the multi-faceted artist explores the self and its perception through Buddhist concepts. Being what you would call a 'free spirit', she once more lets her mind and soul float through transcendent spheres where space and time don't matter, while engulfed in reverb and eerie keyboard textures. The singer-songwriter is a woman of various artistic faces and voices, and you will see and hear many of them in the meditative soliloquies of these seven songs. *Illusory* may not be an essential entry in the book of Jarboe, its intrinsic nature and autotelic purpose of coming to a greater understanding of life make it a fascinating experience, nevertheless.

FOR FANS OF: Anna von Hausswolff, Swans, Chelsea Wolfe

CHRISTINA WENIG



MASTER BOOT RECORD
Floppy Disk Overdrive
METAL BLADE

Italy's synthwave savage fires up the heavy artillery

If synthwave has ever struck you as not quite metal enough for *your* liking, Master Boot Record may be the entry point you've been waiting for. After a series of increasingly berserk underground releases, this mysterious Italian has signed with a big metal label and, possibly out of necessity, delivered an album that pointedly increases the metal quotient, resulting in demented eruptions of electronics and distortion that are craftily structured like authentic metal songs. These are great songs, too: more refined, more memorable and yet even more extreme than last year's wilfully disorientating *Internet Protocol* EP. Exemplified by the eight-minute, digital fever dream of *EDIT.COM*, *Floppy Disk Overdrive* is the ultimate riff-driven, chiptune beat 'em up.

FOR FANS OF: Gost, Igorrr, The Algorithm

DOM LAWSON

SMALL MERCIES

Where EP is short for 'Epic Potential'

CANDLEMASS
The Pendulum
NAPALM

Two inessential LP outtakes, a song Leif Edling wrote for Avatarium, two acoustic interludes and a brief bass solo; an underwhelming EP from the Swedish doom pioneers, evidently content to continue lazing in Sabbath's long shadow.

CHRIS CHANTLER

DRIPBACK
Blessed With Less Than Nothing
4 FAMILY

Dripback aren't deathcore, but no other tag fits quite so well. Their lightning-charged hardcore and crushing death metal paints the world as it should be. Irrepressible and without a turgid breakdown in sight.

RICH HOBSON

MALEVOLENCE
The Other Side
MLVLTD MUSIC

Short, sharp three-track EP from the Sheffield-based metalcore bruisers. The title track goes for a commerciality that fans might not be used to, which, if received well, could be an interesting avenue for the band to explore in future.

REMFRY DEDMAN

RVDRA
KVRV! KVRV! KVRV!
WE DON'T GIVE A FUCK

Italian electronic trance producer B.R.K. channels his inner goth with these four Middle Eastern-flavoured soundscapes and ritualistic chants. Think The Cult dropping DMT with the Hu and scoring a low-budget horror film.

JOE DALY

SUGAR HORSE
Drugs
SELF-RELEASED

Firm believers that slow and steady wins the race, this Bristol doomgaze quartet mark themselves out as real thoroughbreds on their addictive new EP. Featuring five corrosive cuts, it's a magnetic, reputation-making release.

EDWIN MCFEE

WOLFPACK
A.D.
BDHW

Spitting on stereotypes and safe bets, these Parisians continue to see how far brutal metalcore can bend. Ferocious yet unafraid to tap into calm vocals, gritty melodies or industrial influences, this approach pays off spectacularly.

NIK YOUNG

Igorrr: putting the 'mad' into 'nomad'

IGORRR

Spirituality And Distortion

METAL BLADE

Gallic absurdists unleash a globe-trotting tour de force

JOAN OF ARC. Nostradamus. The guy who made *Irreversible*. France is synonymous with extremity, and while Gautier Serre won't burn at the stake for his art, his one-man-project-turned-full-band, Igorrr, follows his country's flagrant tradition. And that's pretty much the only rule he sticks to. Igorrr's fourth full-length, does what so many acts strive and fail to achieve: it creates a world.

Gautier's previous efforts could be fairly dismissed as too random – his concoction of punishing metal, Baroque and electronica often sacrifices quality for weirdness. Not here. Vaguely rooted in the organic, metal-leaning bedrock of 2017's *Savage Sinusoid*, this record spends 56 minutes commuting between France and the East. Harpsichord and accordion feature one minute, sitar and violins the next, their rich textures underpinned by Laure Le Prunenec's haunting, operatic wails and Laurent Lunoir's mightiest orc impressions. *Downgrade Desert* kicks things off and presents an apéritif; you've got olde-style harp, Laure's chanting, glitchy electronics and an orchestral, blackened death metal blast Cradle would have loved to have borrowed in 2010.

Calling it 'Igorrr by numbers' is churlish, but it's a neat summation. From there, Gautier rattles through Primus by way of breakbeats on *Very Noise* before collecting his Cultural Appropriation Award 2020 with, er, *Camel Dancefloor*. But it's brilliant. Authentic. It sounds like you're in an ancient Egyptian rifftomb. The same goes for *Paranoid Bulldozer Italiano*, the drama of which evokes *Downton Abbey* on a cybergrind bender.

Parpaing features Cannibal Corpse's George 'Corpsegrinder' Fisher growling over 8-bit keys, and it's sublime, hilarious. Embarking on an aural journey across the planet *Spirituality And Distortion* is engaging, congruous, steeped in mysticism and utterly unique. It's Igorrr's greatest achievement. And it ends with funky bass. And a bleating sheep. Because it's Igorrr.

FOR FANS OF: Diablo Swing Orchestra, Öxxö Xööx, Rïcïnn

ALEC CHILLINGWORTH

MEDICO PESTE

ב: *The Black Bile*

SEASON OF MIST

Polish black metallers offer tickets to a psychic unravelling

Medico Peste's second album sits on the avant side of black metal, uncovering a host of peculiar realms as it journeys through off-kilter riffs, dissonance and ecclesiastical passages. MP play with your expectations, offering a window into an unhinged mind. *All Too Human* begins on familiar tones before it segues into something altogether alien as orthodox chants push the song into a more sombre sphere. The cloying groove of *Numinous Catastrophy* and its jangling piano feeds into the absurd nature of ב: *The Black Bile*, which becomes increasingly eerie as it progresses to its feverishly wonky end.

FOR FANS OF: Lychgate Mord'A'Stigmata, Furia

CHERYL CARTER

NAAT

Fallen Oracles

ARGONAUTA

Italy's instrumental cosmonauts give your mind room to wander

Naat's second album is a richly hued mosaic of textures, melodies and spacey atmospherics, wrapped around driving tempos and surging post-rock climaxes. At once meditative and exhilarating, tracks like *Liquor* and *Inner Shelter* showcase moments of real brilliance. Pounding metal riffs push, gather and eventually crest, giving way to melodic cascades that gently ebb into the vast recesses of the mind. It would be hard to sustain the dramatic pacing for all 40 minutes and songs can occasionally bleed together. Still, the compositionally taut and highly polished tracks connect as an arresting passage into spiritual dimensions, all leading up to the rapturous *The Highest Tower*. If you're taking a long hike in nature, here's your soundtrack.

FOR FANS OF: Pelican, Karma To Burn, Nebula

JOE DALY

NEKROVAULT

Totenzug: Festering Peregrination

VÁN

Dirty death metal murk anthems from the Bavarian shadows

If you believe death metal should sound ugly and disgusting, rather than polished and pristine, Nekrovault will hijack your shrivelled heart. This is hideous, resolutely murky and opaque DM, just as Satan intended. Lumbering and loose-limbed in a manner that would make Autopsy proud, eight-minute riff-maze *Sepulkrator* and the rampaging, tank-attack of *Psychomanteum – Luminous Flames* get the balance between hazy mystique and all-out savagery exactly right. This has all the grim, abyssal menace and churning dissonance underground nerds demand, but there is colour amid the bubbling sludge, via woozy post-metal interludes and the disorientating dynamics and psychedelic undertow of closer *Eremitorium*. A foul and uncompromising debut.

FOR FANS OF: Tomb Mold, Obliteration, Witch Vomit

DOM LAWSON

OMEGA INFINITY
Solar Spectre
SEASON OF MIST

Inhuman broadcasts from the far reaches of the BM universe

Omega Infinity's debut pulls you towards its all-consuming maw like a deep-space black hole. Dark-ambient passages, industrial sonic booms, interstellar Darkspace-esque black metal, punishing funeral doom/post-metal shifts… all are used by Todtgelichter's Tentakel P. in various configurations throughout, to paint evocative celestial spaces where no human would survive. Space is fucking cold – and Omega Infinity's extreme metal, which also appears to draw upon sci-fi cinematic scores for dynamic arrangement and timely use of bombast, is capable of reaching absolute zero. The post-human screams from Xen (Ne Obliviscaris) and visitant vocals from C. Kolf (Valborg) and Marta (Todtgelichter) elevate the drama, whether it's on the raging solar flares of *Mars*, or, in the case of the latter guest, the feminine *Venus*.

FOR FANS OF: Darkspace, Thorns, Blut Aus Nord

DEAN BROWN

PIGS PIGS PIGS PIGS PIGS PIGS
Viscerals
ROCKET RECORDINGS

Newcastle's psych/sludgers throw some more rabbit punches

This pigeonhole-bucking quintet look set to continue their march towards the top of the UK rock tree with their third full-length. A thrillingly unhinged examination of the human body, health and "the essence that forgoes intellect," *Viscerals* is their most consistently enjoyable – and head-cracking – album to date. Frontman Matt Baty leads the charge with some viscous performances reminiscent of Jesus Lizard's David Yow. *Hell's Teeth* is the catchiest effort Pigs x 7 have ever created and perfect for a singalong, the crushing, groove-laden *World Crust* will open pits and recent wounds, while *Rubbernecker*'s splicing of Jane's Addiction-esque melodies with Goatsnake's blues-fuelled riffola is a more than welcome curveball.

FOR FANS OF: Big Business, Torche, Girl Band

EDWIN MCFEE

PSYCHONAUT
Unfold The God Man
PELAGIC

Belgium's ambitious post-metallers drop a dose of classic psych

While the cascading riffs on Psychonaut's instrumental opening track lure the listener into a sense of comfort, the real hook on *Unfold The God Man* is the vocal partnership of Stefan de Graef and Thomas Michiels. Their harmonised mourning and desperate screams cut a dual-faceted figure against the album's jaunty progressive backdrop. Here the dark, labyrinthine sound is a constant tumble of jagged atmosphere-utilising sludge, post-metal and doom to add weight to the funereal mood while lighter motifs, like the Floydian interlude on *Sananda*, splice up the sombre barrage. Chords jolt against soniferous cries on *Kabuddah,* and momentary drones and choirs foster a sense of eeriness reminiscent of Dimmu Borgir helping to form their vision into something rich, enveloping and far bigger than a three-piece band could normally achieve. Their 15-minute finale, fizzing with complexity, is yet another statement of their burning ambition.

FOR FANS OF: Baroness, Amenra, Stake

HOLLY WRIGHT

REVULSION
Enough To Bleed
BDHW

UK metallic hardcore crew bring fresh layers of fury on their debut

Revulsion have moved into more progressive metallic realms since their debut EP, *Misery Hymns*, but their debut full-length also displays a more crafty, structured side to their gameplan, and it suits them swimmingly. While not all 10 tracks here are memorable, they're all powerful and enraged, and the consistently combative vocals and 'take no prisoners' pace is a captivating combination. However, it is the most layered tracks such as mercilessly heavy *Antagonism*, following its strong introduction with explosive fury, and *Conflagration*, with its introductory audio sample, angry turbulent riffs, and deliciously grating roars, that shine brightest. Gems like these, *Distress* and invigorating closing track *The Pain Process* suggest that Revulsion are onto a winning formula. For the most part, this debut is the definition of dirty, gritty, menacing, and immensely satisfying heaviness.

FOR FANS OF: Malevolence, Venom Prison, Sanction

NIK YOUNG

In This Moment: normal service will not be resumed

IN THIS MOMENT
Mother
ATLANTIC/ROADRUNNER

Maria Brink hones her visceral, hard rock chops

THIRTEEN YEARS ON from debut *Beautiful Tragedy*, LA's In This Moment couldn't be further away – sonically and visually – from their melodic metalcore beginnings, having flourished into hard rock provocateurs by the release of 2012's explosive – and sexually overt – *Blood*. Live shows became synonymous with eye-popping Rob-Zombie-meets-Lady Gaga theatrics more akin to cinematic carnivals, whilst follow-up's *Black Widow* and *Ritual* dabbled in darker electro-pop sensibilities, weaving in occult-themed songs to sit alongside bluesy flourishes.

On this seventh album, Maria Brink and co expand on the sonic sorcery of their past material, attempting to cast a heavier spell via 14 mantra-centric songs. Accordingly, sandwiched between two ominously atmospheric interludes, the pulsating electro-thump of *Fly Like An Eagle* and lead single *The In-Between* hypnotise amongst a flurry of distortion and fire-spitting vitriol. Exhibiting the same soaring range of albums past, Maria somehow manages to raise the level of intensity on her screamed vocals to the point where it's as if she's tearing the demons from her vocal cords.

Skip to *We Will Rock You*, with guest spots from Halestorm's Lzzy Hale and The Pretty Reckless's Taylor Momsen, and you'll hear the Queen classic given the 'girl power' treatment. Despite the collective vocal prowess and guitarist Chris Howorth's six-string precision behind it, the cover doesn't quite deliver, but in a live setting with the full pyro treatment, could well steer into chest-beating anthem territory. Elsewhere, huge hooks and gleaming riffs abound on *As Above, So Below* and groove-tinged *Lay Me Down*, but *Into Dust* trumps them, its spine-tingling introspective keys building to an impassioned climax. With *Mother* as their next chapter, In This Moment are fully embracing their evolution.

FOR FANS OF: Halestorm, Butcher Babies, The Pretty Reckless

SOPHIE MAUGHAN

Katatonia have expanded their emotional spectrum once more

KATATONIA
City Burials
PEACEVILLE

Stockholm's masters of sumptuous sorrow dig deeper still

STOCKHOLM GLOOM KINGS Katatonia have never put a foot wrong in nearly 30 years, always pushing forward, always uniquely Katatonia. Singer Jonas Renkse and guitarist Anders Nyström first commanded the underground's attention with Katatonia's 1992 demo, and by 1998's *Discouraged Ones*, Jonas's alarmingly vulnerable clean vocals were centre-stage, Anders' doomy riffs streamlined into profoundly emotive, achingly sparse structures.

With each LP Katatonia have grown in confidence and craft, but we were still digesting 2016's dense progressive opus, *The Fall Of Hearts*, when the band announced a "hiatus" to "re-evaluate what the future holds." Happily, the future is Katatonia releasing better albums.

Immediately upfront, Jonas's voice again reaches new heights, his increased dexterity and technique never compromising his raw emotion. The band deploy every skill they've learnt; subtle complexities are counterpointed by heads-down riffing, while Jonas regains a caustic six-string heft on progressive headbangers *Behind The Blood* and *Rein*. Advance cut *Lacquer* was a leftfield teaser; its lush electronic balladry might otherwise feel like an interlude between heavier songs, but its fragile beauty deserves attention, and its spirit runs through the album's quieter moments.

For those who came to Katatonia via their scrupulously uncluttered late 90s work, the layers of detail in their modern sound might feel overstated, like they've been visited by the ghost of George Martin. Songs like *Flicker*, *Winter Of Our Passing* and *City Glaciers* would be equally powerful without all the keys, synths, strings and effects, but here's where Katatonia nail that sumptuous, cinematic dynamism. Feeling like the album Tool might have made if they'd remembered what actual human emotions were, *City Burials* is arguably Katatonia's strongest album for 20 years.

FOR FANS OF: Tool, The Cure, Opeth

CHRIS CHANTLER

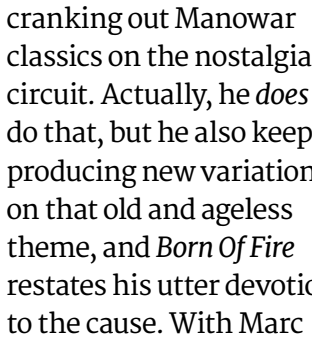
ROSS THE BOSS
Born Of Fire
AFM

True metal icon delivers some fresh battle hymns

As one of the primary architects of 80s metal, Ross The Boss could easily spend all of his time cranking out Manowar classics on the nostalgia circuit. Actually, he *does* do that, but he also keeps producing new variations on that old and ageless theme, and *Born Of Fire* restates his utter devotion to the cause. With Marc Lopes roaring and howling like a man possessed and RTB on blistering form, everything from heads-down opener *Glory To The Slain* to the ruminant squall of *The Blackest Heart* feels like a strident declaration of trad metal's power. It's brutal, bombastic and aimed squarely at the diehards as false metal infidels are trampled underfoot. Quite right

FOR FANS OF: Manowar, Burning Witches, Overkill

DOM LAWSON



SKY VALLEY MISTRESS
Faithless Rituals
NEW HEAVY SOUNDS

Northern UK rockers bring a prismatic palette to their debut

With that name you might expect a set of Kyuss-clone jams, so it's a nice surprise that this effervescent foursome (implausibly from Blackburn) have developed their own identity on this hot-rocking debut. Recorded at stoner ground zero Rancho de la Luna in California's Joshua Tree, SVM undeniably catch some 90s desert rock sunbeams – sandstorm dynamics, squidgy riffs, caveman drums – but there are many colourful touches, and Kayley Davies' voice has promoted comparisons with Elkie Brooks circa Vinegar Joe – not a name often dropped in heavy circles, but an astute pointer to Sky Valley Mistress's tight-but-loose groove and sassy attitude.

FOR FANS OF: Kyuss, Led Zeppelin, Amy Winehouse

CHRIS CHANTLER

SWEVEN
The Eternal Resonance
VÁN

Ex-Morbus Chron mainman reaches out into post-death nirvana

The Eternal Resonance is a fascinating album for fans of the much-missed Morbus Chron. Helmed by that progressive death metal band's main songwriter, Robert Andersson, this essential debut may be less DM than the modern classic *Sweven*, but it is its natural spiritual successor. Andersson's unhinged screams remain, yet his guitar playing is even more nuanced and expansive than before. There's a greater neo-classical bent to his rich, adventurous phrasing, which runs the gauntlet in terms of extreme styles and occasionally crosses into neo-folk while retaining bite throughout, even at his most grandstanding or introspective. It's a truly exciting re-genesis and proof that Morbus Chron inhabit the same creative sphere as contemporaries Tribulation.

FOR FANS OF: Morbus Chron, Tribulation, Agrimonia

DEAN BROWN

WORLD SERVICE
Heavy metal uprisings from around the globe

ARCADA
Deeply in thrall to *De Mysteriis Dom Sathanas*, this Peruvian four-piece's debut album teeters on the borders of workmanlike and ravishing, the tides of barbed riffs sloshing against the gateway to something truly transcendent.

JONATHAN SELZER

DIARCHY
Splitfire
UNHERD MUSIC

The vocals on this Indian duo's second full-length may not be to everyone's tastes, but the majestic lead of *Gone Too Late*, hypnotic vibe and meaty staccato riffs of the title track have lots to offer.

ADAM REES

HAYVANLAR ALEMI
Psychedelia In Times Of Turbulence
SUBSOUND

Three Turkish voyagers synthesise the styles of Africa, the Middle East, Asia and beyond into an eclectic clutch of audio psilocybin. An expansive, slow-winding trip that merits a ride.

JOE DALY

TAR
As If We Were Never Here
SELF-RELEASED

Swedish black-death crew undergo a creative rebirth

This Swedish quintet have prior form as Eldrimner, who existed for 13 years without leaving much of a dent. The new name has been accompanied by a sonic tidy-up, with the sharp edges polished to a battle-ready gleam and the thornier black metal elements trimmed so far back that things have started to itch. *As If We Were Never Here* suggests the transition has been seamless; the djentish riffs are delivered at a bounding, borderline thrash pace and the clearly enunciated rasps jostle confidently alongside clean melodies and trickles of quicksilver guitar. Truth be told, the metamorphosis has left them in a rather safe place musically, but that's not to say that this new chapter doesn't hold promise – just look to the intertwining vocals of *Glömd* and *Homo Sapiens* or the chiming post-rock of *The Garden Beneath* for proof.

FOR FANS OF: Lamb Of God, Skyharbor, Tesseract

ALEX DELLER

TELEPATHY
Burn Embrace
SVART

Instrumental post-metallers finally poke their heads above the clouds

While Telepathy's 2017 second album, *Tempest*, showed new signs of maturity after their disjointed debut, it still had room to grow. Now, the instrumental outfit's third offering feels much closer to 'cinematic'. Using post-metal's characteristic 'dark days with a dash of hope' template, *Burn Embrace* shimmers with semi-sad tremolos and is careful not to go too 'funeral' with its sludgy tones. By paying attention to the more delicate moments of their repertoire, Telepathy have achieved just the right balance of earth and air. They're not without their Pallbearer comparisons, such as on the rising and falling mechanics of *Aonaran*, however, the atmosphere that effuses from their tumbling sludge riffs, reverb-drenched high notes, the considerate use of tempo, and the glistening production courtesy of Jaime Gomez Arellano results in immersive and evocative post-metal.

FOR FANS OF: Pallbearer, Bossk, Pelican

HOLLY WRIGHT

TENSIDE
Glamour & Gloom
IVORYTOWER /EDEL

Long-running Germans still hitched to the metalcore wagon

Having just got off the road with Killswitch Engage, German quartet Tenside are in a great position to release this, their seventh full-length record. Frontman Daniel Kuhlemann's assertion that "We don't want to be metalcore" doesn't entirely ring true throughout *Glamour & Gloom*'s 11 tracks but the band do at least stray outside the constraints of that genre in fleeting bursts. The moments when they do are when the album is at its most successful. *The Devil Within* and lead single *Cannibals* provide just enough of a contrast to not write them off completely, whilst *As Above So Below* is instantly memorable, even if it does recall Lamb Of God's *Redneck* a little too closely for comfort. This far into their career, it would have made for a better album if Tenside had trusted their instincts and deviated with more determination.

FOR FANS OF: Hatebreed, Heart Of A Coward, Killswitch Engage

REMFRY DEDMAN

THANATOS
Violent Death Rituals
LISTENABLE

Dutch death godfathers bring fresh horrors from the Netherworlds

Quite possibly the Netherlands' first death metal band, Thanatos deserve to be European extreme metal royalty up there with the rabid likes of Kreator and Hellhammer. Alas, fortune has not smiled on them over the past 36 years, but as their seventh record shows, there's still plenty of opportunity for the band to claw their way to glory yet. From the imperiousness of *The Silent War* to the stalk-and-maul approach of *Corporate Indoctrination*, *Violent Death Rituals* is 45 minutes of glorious extreme metal mastery, at its very best when the band strike a balance between the unholy trinity that forms the core of their sound – thrashy death metal with a pinch of first-wave black metal. At this point, quite what else the band can do to earn acclaim is a mystery, but rest assured, this record is everything you could hope for from a coulda-woulda-should-be legendary act.

FOR FANS OF: Possessed, Kreator, Kaoteon

RICH HOBSON

Oranssi Pazuzu take another ride on the astral plane

ORANSSI PAZUZU
Mestarin Kynsi
NUCLEAR BLAST

Finland's cosmic black metal overlords refine their warp drive

BUILDING ON THE strengths of three progressively wilder albums, 2016 saw the Finnish five-piece notch a new high with *Värähtelijä*, a mind-warping excursion through the tattered fringes of psychedelic black metal. These shamanic Finns inhabit a world where the most extreme strains of modern metal splash violently alongside krautrock, acid house and even jazz. You could be forgiven for wondering what more their new album could possibly add to the mix? The answer is: nothing. In fact, *Mestarin Kynsi* sees the band moving in the opposite direction – pulling back the dizzying scale of their assault for a feverish, 51-minute headtrip that unleashes a blinding psychedelic maelstrom that lacks neither the ambition nor the intensity of its predecessors.

Repetition is the backbone of psychedelic music; rhythmic or melodic patterns repeat over and over as new elements are gradually introduced. In this way, opener *Ilmestys* begins with a slow and unwinding progression of two jangly guitar notes, bent to the point of dissonance. The motif builds and repeats until, at the five-minute mark, a blasphemous siege of howls, power chords, cymbals and drums erupts and drives the song to its breathtaking end. *Kuulen Ääniä Maan Alta* is a wild, driving surge of electronica, gradually pulsating into a neck-snapping gauntlet of extremity before ceding to a droney haze of chilly atmospherics.

There's an undeniable stripped-down quality to these six tracks; you can hear it in a clearer separation of instruments and dynamics. And it works exceedingly well. Not for the faint-hearted, *Mestarin Kynsi* is a thoroughly intense and captivating departure from this earthly realm. You might need a walk and a bit of sunshine when it's over, if only to clear your head for your inevitable return.

FOR FANS OF: Blut Aus Nord, Dark Buddha Rising, Deathspell Omega

JOE DALY

Parkway Drive: having a devil of a time at Wacken

PARKWAY DRIVE

Viva The Underdogs

EPITAPH

Byron Bay firestarters bottle their (Ger)manic energy at Wacken

THE METEORIC RISE of Aussie metalcore heroes Parkway Drive has been well celebrated and well documented, but never in such painstaking detail as the band do on their excellent *Viva The Underdogs* documentary. To celebrate its release comes Parkway's first live album, of the same name. It hopes to capture possibly the key element that has turned Parkway Drive into one of this decade's most significant acts: their always awe-inspiring shows. In typical Parkway style, the attitude is 'go big or don't bother', as the band have decided to release their headlining set from last year's Wacken Open Air festival in front of 75,000 fans.

Live albums can be famously hit and miss affairs, and there's no doubt that sitting at home with *Viva The Underdogs* playing through your tiny bluetooth speaker is no substitute for seeing the flames, the explosions, the circle-pits and the general madness of Parkway Drive in the flesh. That being said, there is, has and always will be something about this band's energy that is so infectious, and hearing Winston McCall scream "Holy shit!" in sheer disbelief at the sheer number of people that have come to see his band at the end of opener *Prey* just immediately gets you in the mood. A crushing riff sandwich like *Idols* followed by a giggle and a "Danke" from Winston is as close to experiencing a festival headline set from the band as you're likely to get without actually being there.

We also get three reworkings of Parkway tunes in German, which, when you consider the power metal influence in songs like *Vice Grip* and *Shadowboxing* (or 'Wurgegriff' and 'Schattenboxen', as they are renamed here, to pleasingly aesthetic effect), actually gives those songs an even stronger flavour than their original, non-Teutonic recordings. *Viva The Underdogs* might not singe your eyebrows and leave the smell of burnt gasoline in your nostrils like Parkway Drive usually do, but it's definitely worth getting involved in.

FOR FANS OF: While She Sleeps, Heaven Shall Burn, Killswitch Engage

STEPHEN HILL

TODAY IS THE DAY

No Good To Anyone

BMG

More psyche-ravaged battles from the Orland, Maine trenches

Today Is The Day have suffered their share of psychic pain over the past 28 years, to the point where their career arc seems to mirror the different stages of grief. *No Good To Anyone* sees this emotional turmoil accompanied by real, physical agony, with lynchpin Steve Austin beset by serious, system-wracking health problems. The queasily majestic title track opens with the band's trademark hood-of-bees vocals and clangorous production values, but overall the poison here is far more subtle, at times approaching slowcore levels of introspection. If it's less abrasive than the band's wider output, it's no less gruelling – an endurance test of triumph over suffering, no matter the physical cost.

FOR FANS OF: Converge, Dead In The Manger, Starkweather

ALEX DELLER

TVIVLER

Ego

NEGATIV PSYKOLOGI

Scandic, avant-hardcore incursions for the stout of heart

The instant a band calls themselves "dance punk", prejudicial walls are likely to go up, along with an immediate dismissal of whatever shit's being slung. Copenhagen's Tvivler might not pointedly identify with anything designed to get undernourished hipsters moving at a loft party, but for an angularly crisp and violently noisy punk band, this quartet's secret is groove and soul. It may be tough to discern from beneath the dissonant twanging and clanging guitar parries, the collision of free jazz bleating and spasmodic noisecore and the brief exploration of subdued no-wave and krautrock, but caustic sonics have rarely possessed the power to sear skin and inflame neck muscles while having the listener clap on the two-and-four.

FOR FANS OF: Breach, Refused, Code Orange

CONNIE GORDON

VIDEO NASTIES

Dominion

APF

Liverpudlian gore hounds promise a bloody good time

Video Nasties offer a remarkably well-realised platter of splatter on their debut album, fusing bombastic melodeath with rambunctious rock swagger and lashings of vintage horror movie samples – like At The Gates and *Wolverine Blues*-era Entombed playing drinking games whilst watching *The Thing*. Indeed, the band cite John Carpenter as an influence, but this doesn't mean everything is slathered in spooky retro synth; rather, the band's unorthodox note choices draw more from the eerie but campy realm of horror scores instead of simply reading from the death metal rulebook. Combined with the hooky rock leanings here, it makes for quite a potent combo.

FOR FANS OF: At The Gates, Entombed, Carcass

KEZ WHELAN

VILLAGERS OF IOANNINA CITY
Age Of Aquarius
NAPALM

Unsung Greek folk heroes rightly promoted to the spotlight

While Rotting Christ have introduced Greek folk instruments of late, Villagers Of Ioannina City do so with a more refined, smouldering approach. The opening title track perfectly balances affecting guitars with melodies from a traditional wind instrument, the kaval. It's a potent mix of modern rock structure with ancient melancholy that stirs the soul, as bagpipes herald the primal celebration of *Dance Of Night* before building into a thunderous crescendo. The angular, swirling thrum of *Part V* alongside Alex's soaring vocals are a particular highpoint of this re-release, while the Southern swing of *Millennium Blues* and the driving post-punk of *Cosmic Soul* and *For The Innocent* finish proceedings with a surprising change of pace. A hidden gem.

FOR FANS OF: Wovenhand, Klone, Emma Ruth Rundle

ADAM REES

VISCERA
Obsidian
UNIQUE LEADER

Jamie Graham finds a new vehicle to churn up the landscape

Led by ex-Heart Of A Coward frontman Jamie Graham and featuring ex- members of Abhorrent Decimation and Martyr Defiled, the credentials of this emerging powerhouse will pique interest before *Obsidian*'s polished production and just enough rust left on the blade will retain it. The five-piece seamlessly combine the technicality of modern death with addictive hooks without compromising on ferocity. Straight out of the blocks, *Delilah* obliterates the senses via a devastating combo of atmospheric synths and chugging riffs before slam-heavy *Immersed In Ire* boots you in the teeth amongst a demented flurry of pig squeals. Elsewhere the title track's blastbeat-packing intensity is balanced by Jamie's searing vocal introspection and some thrilling twin-lead guitar work. Viscera could become the jewel in the Unique Leader crown.

FOR FANS OF: Sylosis, The Black Dahlia Murder, Brand Of Sacrifice

SOPHIE MAUGHAN

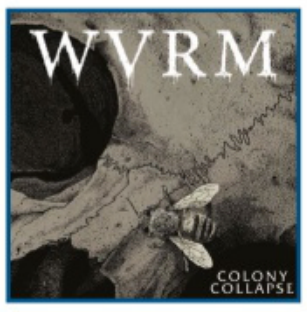
WUW
Rétablir L'Eternité
PROSTHETIC

French band of brothers reconvene for second avant assault

French brothers Benjamin and Guillaume Colin present a second volume of adventurous doomscaping following 2018's *Rien Ne Nous Sera Épargné* and it's even more monolithically awe-inspiring than its predecessor. The presence of Yakuza/Corrections House saxophonist Bruce Lamont is a fair indication of where WuW exist on the metal spectrum; the brothers share an artsy heaviness with the aforementioned outfits, their eschatological rumblings packaged in with lessons learned from the worlds of contemporary composition (the brothers are classically trained), jazz and drone. Across these five tracks the duo distinguish themselves as masters of noise but also space and silence, for example the manner in which *Danser Dans Le Champ Des Battements Du Temps* emerges gradually from nothingness like some eldritch horror slurping its way through the void.

FOR FANS OF: Triptykon, Godspeed You! Black Emperor, King Crimson

JOSEPH STANNARD



WVRM
Colony Collapse
PROSTHETIC

South Carolina death-grinders just want to watch the world burn

On their third full-length, WVRM have chiselled their modern take on grindcore into an even leaner and more visceral beast, blasting away with an almost clinical intensity. There's a strong hardcore influence here too, with the album infested with the kind of hulking, propulsive breakdowns that seem custom designed to generate circle-pits – although, on tracks like devastating opener *Walled Slum City*, these approach the same kind of gleeful, knuckle-dragging brute force as Mortician's slower moments rather than your typical hardcore breakdown. *Furious Movement//The Burning Tower* introduces a bit more of a noise rock, utilising a cacophony of pick slides to brilliantly disorientating effect, before the title track drifts into ultra-harsh Bastard Noise territory. This is unsubtle, no-nonsense deathgrind fury that will certainly scratch your blastbeat itch.

FOR FANS OF: Full Of Hell, Dead In The Dirt, Rotten Sound

KEZ WHELAN

Testament: thrash metal's dream team

TESTAMENT
Titans Of Creation
NUCLEAR BLAST

Uncle Chuck's wrecking crew return to conquer

SINCE ROARING BACK into action with 2008's *The Formation Of Damnation*, Testament have been on great form. Always a little smarter than the average thrash band, the Bay Area legends have long bridged the divide between old-school attitude and state-of-the-art sonic brutality, but they've never sounded more ferocious than they do on *Titans Of Creation*. With the dream team line-up of classic-era members Chuck Billy, Eric Petersen and Alex Skolnick and a simply peerless rhythm section of bassist Steve DiGiorgio and drummer Gene Hoglan, Testament enter a new decade sounding absurdly confident and powerful.

As epic opener *Children Of The Next Level* erupts, you may feel compelled to leap to your feet and start applauding, so immaculate and thunderous is the band's newly re-tweaked sound. Diehard fans will be thrilled, because these songs all boast plenty of the tics and tropes that defined Testament's early classics, but there is nothing old-fashioned about the ripping, groove-driven thrash of *WWII* or the melodic malevolence of *Dream Deceiver*. Instead, these are meticulously crafted modern metal anthems, delivered with levels of muscle and virtuosity that few younger bands can match and fronted by one of metal's most iconic vocalists.

By the time you get to the vicious and morbid *Night Of The Witch*, it's a done deal; Testament have never sounded heavier, nor more utterly committed to crushing everything in sight. And the highlights come thick and fast; *Ishtars Gate* takes bullish catchiness of the band's *Practice What You Preach* era and pumps it full of steroids and mescaline; *Symptoms* is a haughty, mid-paced chug-tsunami, with Chuck Billy in multi-voice versatility mode. Testament may be veterans, but on *Titans Of Creation* they sound like a lean, hungry and acutely focused band of brothers, on a laudable mission to pulverise the world. Sign up or get flattened.

FOR FANS OF: Megadeth, Death Angel, Sylosis

DOM LAWSON

Trivium: the boys are back

TRIVIUM

WHAT THE DEAD MEN SAY

ROADRUNNER

Florida's finest hit their apex

ONCE AGAIN, TRIVIUM have some fire in their bellies following a period of dubious decision-making and divisive musical output. While neither 2013's David Draiman-produced *Vengeance Falls* nor 2015's power metal-tastic *Silence In The Snow* were stinkers (both warmly received by critics, both producing songs that have remained setlist staples), they evidently weren't what a lot of fans were looking for. Fears grew that they'd scuppered their momentum, much like they had a decade prior with *The Crusade*.

Thankfully, 2017's *The Sin And The Sentence* set things right by taking us back to basics: no outside influences, no cheese, no nonsense, just full-throated heavy fucking metal. Bolstered by an astonishing run of live shows, the message was clear: Trivium were on a tear again.

Which brings us to *What The Dead Men Say*. In years gone by, this is the point where Trivium would overthink their next move, side-stepping into bemusing experimentation or cynical box-ticking. Not this time. This album *rips*.

The title track sets the tone: riffs, riffs and more riffs, pinned together by tight, muscular drum work from Alex Bent and enough hooks to snare Cthulhu. *Catastrophist* is another riff-storm armed with a big-ass chorus, its relentless six and a half minutes continuously dialling up the pace and intensity. *Amongst The Shadows And The Stones* is an explosive clash of battering blastbeats and rumbling basslines, Matt Heafy's snarling roar sounding like he's spent the two and a half years between records gargling hot coals. *Bleed Into Me* is a sombre, see-sawing anthem that tugs at the heartstrings without flopping into overwrought bollocks, while *The Defiant* feels like Trivs took *Heart From Your Hate* and sent it to bootcamp. *Sickness Unto You* could have come from *The Blackening*, such is its scope, lurching from swaying riffs into thrashing gallops into a tremolo-packed midsection into blastbeats into stomping great grooves into… look, there's a lot going on.

Scattering The Ashes is a high-octane heavy metal banger charged with emotion. *Bending The Arc To Fear* indulges Trivium's extreme metal influences with lashings of black, death and Gojira-esque pick scrapes, leaving *The Ones We Leave Behind* to wrap things up in spectacular style. It's stupidly fast, epically heavy and boasts a commanding, empowering performance from The Heaf, sounding like a man who could sing an army straight off a cliff.

Despite the slight shift in Trivium's song-writing process – bassist Paolo Gregoletto contributed the lion's share of the lyrics – there is absolutely no upending of balance or identity here. Quite the opposite: despite the album's many layers, this is as taught and focused as Trivium have ever sounded, and at nine songs (plus intro), it never outstays its welcome.

The Sin And The Sentence got Trivium back on the horse. *What The Dead Men Say* has them winning again. One of metal's most beloved bands are on the form of their lives right now. It doesn't get much better than that.

FOR FANS OF: Machine Head, Metallica, Gojira

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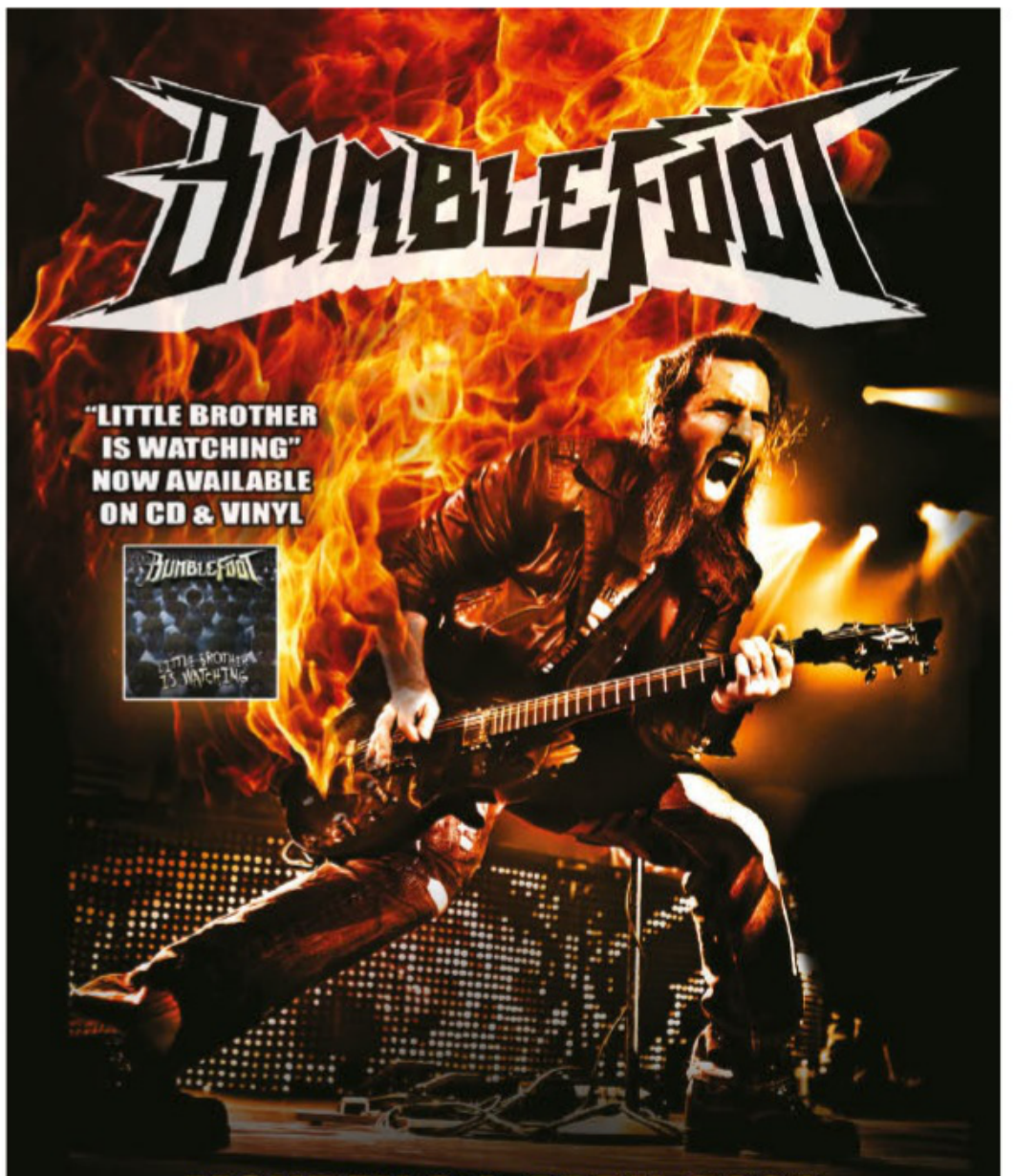

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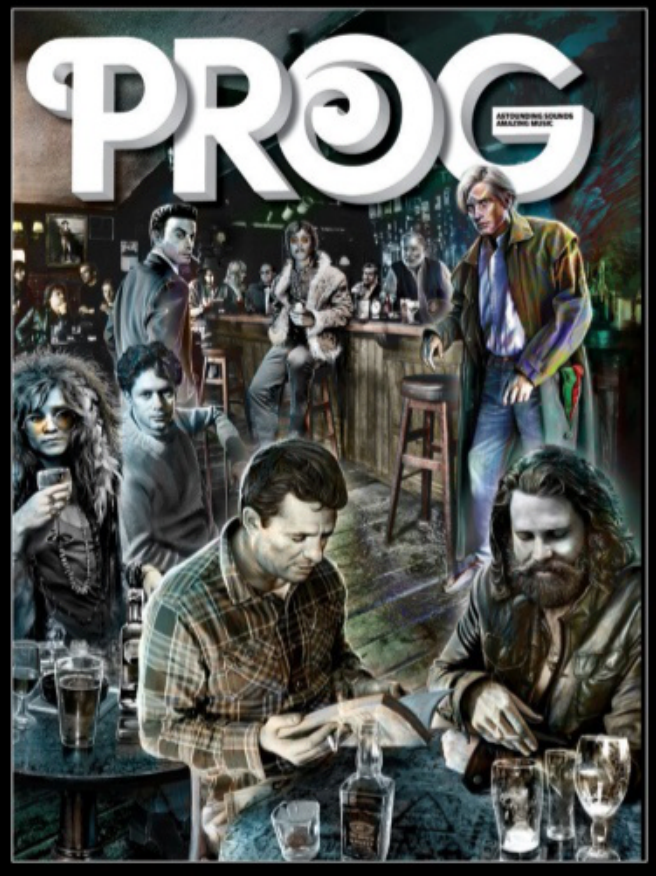

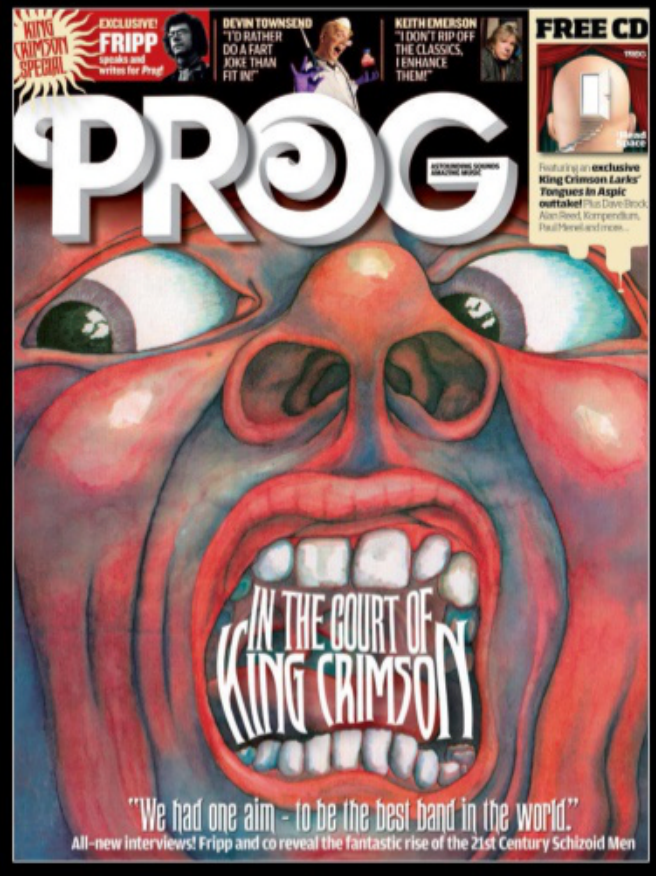

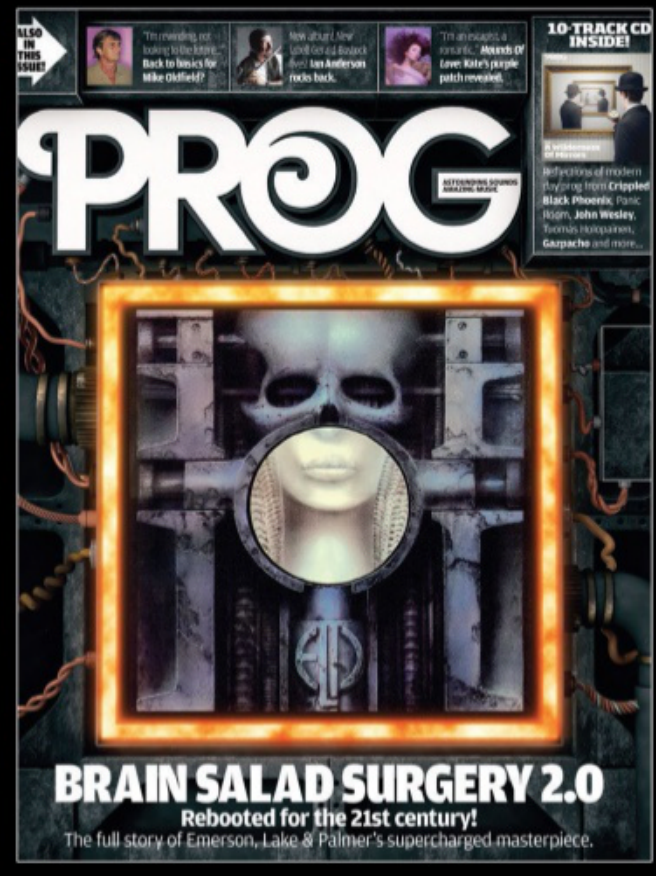

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LIVE EVIL

Your essential guide to the best and the biggest metal bands hitting the UK

2000TREES FESTIVAL
CREEPER, KNOCKED LOOSE, DREAM STATE, SHVPES, ITHACA + MORE

JUL 9–11 CHELTENHAM Upcote Farm

A DAY TO REMEMBER
MAY 23 HATFIELD Hatfield House
MAY 24 LEEDS Temple Newsam
MAY 25 GLASGOW SSE Hydro
MAY 27 CARDIFF Motorpoint Arena
MAY 28 NOTTINGHAM Arena

AEROSMITH
JUL 15 LONDON O2 Arena
JUL 18 MANCHESTER Arena

ARCTANGENT
OPETH, TESSERACT, SWANS, IHSAHN, CHELSEA WOLFE, LEPROUS, AMENRA, PERTURBATOR, ROLO TOMASSI, OATHBREAKER + MORE

AUG 20–22 BRISTOL Fernhill Farm

BLOODSTOCK OPEN AIR
DEVIN TOWNSEND, BEHEMOTH, JUDAS PRIEST, SKINDRED, PARADISE LOST, HATEBREED, SAXON, ORANGE GOBLIN, BURY TOMORROW, JINJER, LIFE OF AGONY, VIO-LENCE, SACRED REICH, DIAMOND HEAD + MORE

AUG 6–9 DERBYSHIRE Catton Hall

BURY TOMORROW
APR 2 LONDON Underworld
APR 3 LONDON Pryzm
APR 4 BIRMINGHAM HMV Vault
APR 5 SOUTHAMPTON Joiners
APR 7 LEEDS Headrow House

CORROSION OF CONFORMITY
SPIRIT ADRIFT

APR 25 DUBLIN Academy
APR 26 BELFAST Limelight 2
APR 28 GLASGOW Garage
APR 29 MANCHESTER Academy2

DESERTFEST
MASTERS OF REALITY, CORROSION OF CONFORMITY, ORANGE GOBLIN, WITCHCRAFT, GRAVEYARD, BRANT BJORK, RAGING SPEEDHORN + MORE

MAY 1–3 LONDON Camden Various Venues

DOWNLOAD FESTIVAL
IRON MAIDEN, SYSTEM OF A DOWN, KISS, KORN, DEFTONES, DISTURBED, KILLSWITCH ENGAGE, MASTODON, ALTER BRIDGE, GOJIRA, VOLBEAT, BABYMETAL, OF MICE & MEN, THE WILDHEARTS, BARONESS + MORE

JUNE 12–14 DONINGTON Park

EVANESCENCE & WITHIN TEMPTATION
APR 7 LONDON O2 Arena
APR 28 GLASGOW SSE Hydro
APR 30 LEEDS First Direct Arena
MAY 5 BIRMINGHAM Arena

FAITH NO MORE
JUN 10 MANCHESTER O2 Apollo
JUN 11 GLASGOW O2 Academy
JUN 13 IRELAND Punchestown Sunstroke Festival
JUN 15 BIRMINGHAM Academy
JUN 16 LONDON O2 Academy Brixton

GUNS N' ROSES
MAY 29+30 LONDON Tottenham Hotspur Stadium
JUN 27 DUBLIN Marlay Park

HEALTH
JUNE 2 LONDON Studio 9294

HELLOWEEN
OCT 4 MANCHESTER Academy
OCT 5 LONDON O2 Brixton Academy

IN FLAMES
APR 24 EDINBURGH Liquid Room
APR 26 LIVERPOOL O2 Academy 2
APR 27 SHEFFIELD Leadmill
APR 29 BRISTOL Thekla
APR 30 WOLVERHAMPTON Steel Mill
MAY 1 STOKE Sugarmill
MAY 2 LONDON ULU
MAY 3 BRIGHTON Concorde 2
MAY 5 SOUTHAMPTON Engine Rooms

From coffee shops to Wembley – you name it, Polaris will play it

ROAD TRIPPIN'

POLARIS

Australia's next big hopes bring a stacked bill for a run of UK dates this May

You opened Wembley Arena with Architects last year. How did that feel?
Jamie Hails (vocals): "It was incredible! I kept going out every five minutes and the crowd just kept growing, I was wondering where all these people were coming from. We played an arguably well-packed room and it was a huge room, too! Especially in the style of music we play, not many bands ever have the opportunity to play such an iconic venue – that was a massive tick in the book for us."

What's the strangest venue you've ever played?
"There was a little venue in Wollongong called Yours And Owls which was a tiny 70-capacity room that was actually a coffee shop they'd open up as a venue in the evening. You'd see the wildest shows in there because the band sets up on the floor and the crowd is right in your face. I remember the first time we rocked up to that place years ago saying to ourselves, 'Are we really playing in here? How the heck is this going to work? Where do we load in? There's only one door through the crowd in the tiny little cafe area!'"

What's been your proudest touring moment with Polaris?
"On our last headline Australia tour, we played a Sydney venue called Metro Theatre where we've seen so many of our favourite bands play over the years. We've been lucky to play there supporting bands but being able to headline it was absolutely unbelievable. We're playing an even bigger venue on our next tour and that will probably replace it but Metro Theatre holds a special place in our hearts. We never thought we'd be playing the level of shows we do, we never even thought we'd get to the stage where we released a full-length album and now we've done two."

Your second album, *The Death Of Me*, is out soon. How did things work the second time around?
"It was quite stressful because we realised we hadn't left ourselves much time to work; we kept accepting tours for 2019 and the year was stacking up. Looking back, we could have held off a bit longer to give ourselves less stress, but things happen for a reason and it's the best material we've ever created. Next time we definitely won't book that many tours while trying to write – that was hell!" H

Power Trip: sweatpants just out of shot

ROAD TRIPPIN'

POWER TRIP

The best thrash band of the modern era on a bill with Lamb Of God and Kreator. Not bad!

2019 was busy for you guys. How has 2020 been going?
Riley Gale (vocals): "We're pounding away on the next record but we're having trouble working out how to approach it. We're contemplating putting it out independently because we'd rather own our music. 2019 was a year of educating ourselves on how to approach the next couple of years as a band. I've picked up a post-punk hardcore side-project called Masterpiece Machine with Jonah [Falco] and Mike [Haliechuk] from Fucked Up. It's really out of my wheelhouse and we'll have two songs out by the summer. I've also just finished tracking a song with Body Count and it's pretty surreal hearing me and Ice T on a song together."

This Lamb Of God/Kreator tour is insane! How much does this tour mean to you?
"It's one thing taking a band out on their first big tour, which is what Lamb Of God did for us years ago; it's another thing to ask us to do something again. We're hoping it won't feel like a grind because we've been grinding European tours since 2015. We should've said no to this tour so we could work on our album but it's too important to turn down. This tour doesn't need us to be a raging success but if you mashed Lamb Of God and Kreator together, it'd probably sound like Power Trip."

What's new in Power Trip merch?
"One very hotly debated item on the last tour was our sweatpants. Our merch company accidentally ordered straight-legged, no elastic sweatpants and we were gonna send them back but we had to try them. There's three reactions to them: people who hate them because they look like raver/nu metal pants; high fashion-minded people thinking baggy clothes are in fashion; and those with no fashion sense whatsoever who love gamer sweatpants they can wear in and out of the house."

Why do we keep seeing Power Trip merch across the globe?
"A friend spotted a Power Trip long-sleeve cut into a crop top cape being sold in some really nice boutique in Hamburg for €80! Then one company clearly ripped off our designs to make money off it, so I asked them to collaborate with us for charity. Now they're gonna do Power Trip stamped leather wallets and give the money to charity." H

KNOTFEST
SLIPKNOT + MORE TBA
AUG 22 MILTON KEYNES Bowl

LAMB OF GOD
KREATOR
POWERTRIP
APR 21 BRISTOL O2 Academy
APR 22 MANCHESTER Academy
APR 23 GLASGOW O2 Academy
APR 24 BIRMINGHAM O2 Academy
APR 25 LONDON O2 Academy

MACHINE HEAD
JUNE 5 LONDON O2 Brixton Academy
JUNE 6 BIRMINGHAM Academy

MICHAEL SCHENKER FEST
APR 16 WOLVERHAMPTON KK's Steelmill
APR 17 NEWCASTLE City Hall
APR 18 LEEDS Academy
APR 19 LONDON Shepherd's Bush Empire

MY CHEMICAL ROMANCE
JUNE 18-21 MILTON KEYNES MK Dons Stadium

NIGHTWISH
DEC 12 CARDIFF Motorpoint Arena
DEC 18 LONDON SSE Arena Wembley

OZZY OSBOURNE
JUDAS PRIEST
OCT 23 NEWCASTLE Arena
OCT 25 GLASGOW Hydro Arena
OCT 28 LONDON O2 Arena
OCT 31 BIRMINGHAM Arena

PEARL JAM
PIXIES
WHITE REAPER
JUL 10 LONDON Hyde Park

POLARIS
ALPHA WOLF, CURRENTS, VARIALS
MAY 3 BRISTOL The Fleece
MAY 4 BIRMINGHAM O2 Academy2
MAY 5 GLASGOW G2
MAY 6 LONDON O2 Islington Academy

RADAR FESTIVAL
DIRTY LOOPS, HAKEN, PLINI, HUMANITY'S LAST BREATH, TOSKA, CONJURER, HACKTIVIST, VOYAGER, UNPROCESSED, PALM READER, JAKUB ZYTECKI + MORE
JUL31-AUG 1 GUILDFORD Casino

RAMBLIN' MAN FAIR
CLUTCH, LYNYRD SKYNYRD, RIVAL SONGS, MONSTER TRUCK, GRAND MAGUS, HAWKWIND, BLACK STAR RIDERS, PHIL CAMPBELL & THE BASTARD SONS, BLUES PILLS + MORE
JULY 17-19 MAIDSTONE Mote Park

RAMMSTEIN
JUN 14 CARDIFF Principality Stadium
JUN 17 BELFAST Boucher Playing Fields
JUN 20 COVENTRY Ricoh Arena

SKINDRED
NOV 21 LONDON Roundhouse

SKUNK ANANSIE
JUN 17 NORWICH Nick Rayns LCR
JUN 19 SHEFFIELD O2 Academy
JUN 20 BIRMINGHAM O2 Academy
OCT 26 GUILDFORD G Live
OCT 27 LEICESTER O2 Academy
OCT 28 FOLKSTONE Leas Cliff Hall
NOV 28 LINCOLN Engine Shed
NOV 29 NOTTINGHAM Rock City
DEC 1 GLASGOW O2 Academy
DEC 2 NEWCASTLE O2 Academy
DEC 3 LEEDS O2 Academy
DEC 5 CARDIFF University Great Hall
DEC 6 BRISTOL O2 Academy
DEC 7 MANCHESTER O2 Victoria Warehouse
DEC 9 BRIGHTON Dome
DEC 10 CAMBRIDGE Corn Exchange

SLAM DUNK FESTIVAL
CODE ORANGE, WHILE SHE SLEEPS, BURY TOMORROW, THE USED, ICE NINE KILLS, REFUSED + MORE
MAY 23 LEEDS Temple Newsam
MAY 24 HATFIELD Park

THUNDER
UGLY KID JOE
NOV 19 CARDIFF Arena
NOV 20 BIRMINGHAM Arena
NOV 21 LONDON Wembley Arena
NOV 27 GLASGOW SEC
NOV 28 LEEDS Arena

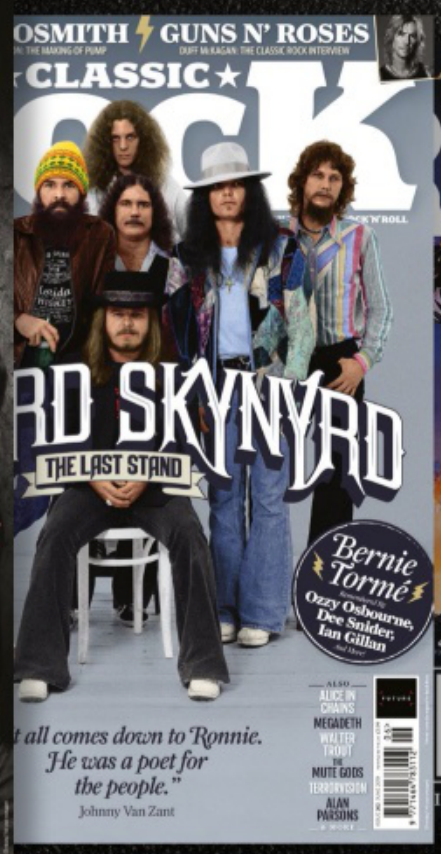
W.A.S.P.
OCT 1 BRISTOL SWX
OCT 2 LONDON Kentish Town Forum
OCT 3 NOTTINGHAM Rock City
OCT 4 NEWCASTLE Academy
OCT 5 GLASGOW Academy
OCT 7 BELFAST Limelight
OCT 8 DUBLIN Academy
OCT 9 MANCHESTER Albert Hall
OCT 10 WOLVERHAMPTON KK's Steel Mill
OCT 11 LEEDS Stylus
OCT 13 NORWICH UEA
OCT 14 CARDIFF Tramshed
OCT 15 COVENTRY Empire

WHITESNAKE
FOREIGNER, EUROPE
MAY 31 LONDON O2 Arena
JUN 1 CARDIFF Motorpoint
JUN 3 BIRMINGHAM Arena
JUN 4 GLASGOW SSE Hydro
JUN 6 NEWCASTLE Utilita Arena
JUN 8 MANCHESTER Arena

WILLIAM DUVALL
MAR 29 LIVERPOOL Arts Loft
MAR 31 BIRMINGHAM O2 Academy 3
APR 01 LONDON 100 Club

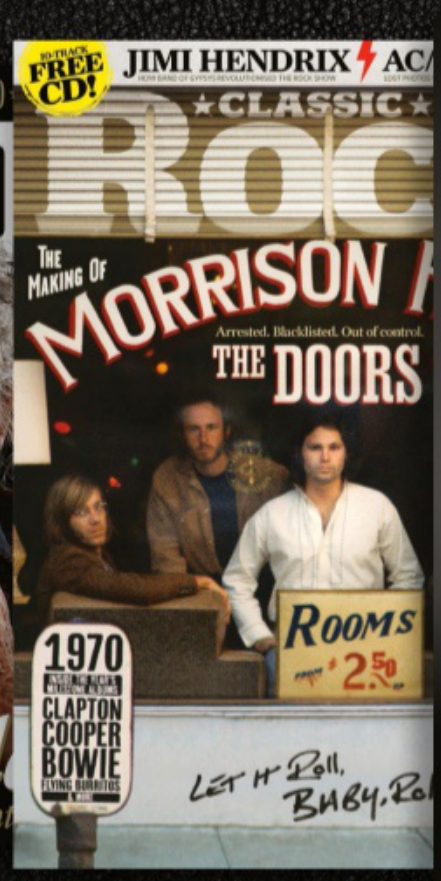
WINTERFYLLETH
MORK
MAY 22 LONDON Boston Music Room
MAY 23 MANCHESTER Rebellion

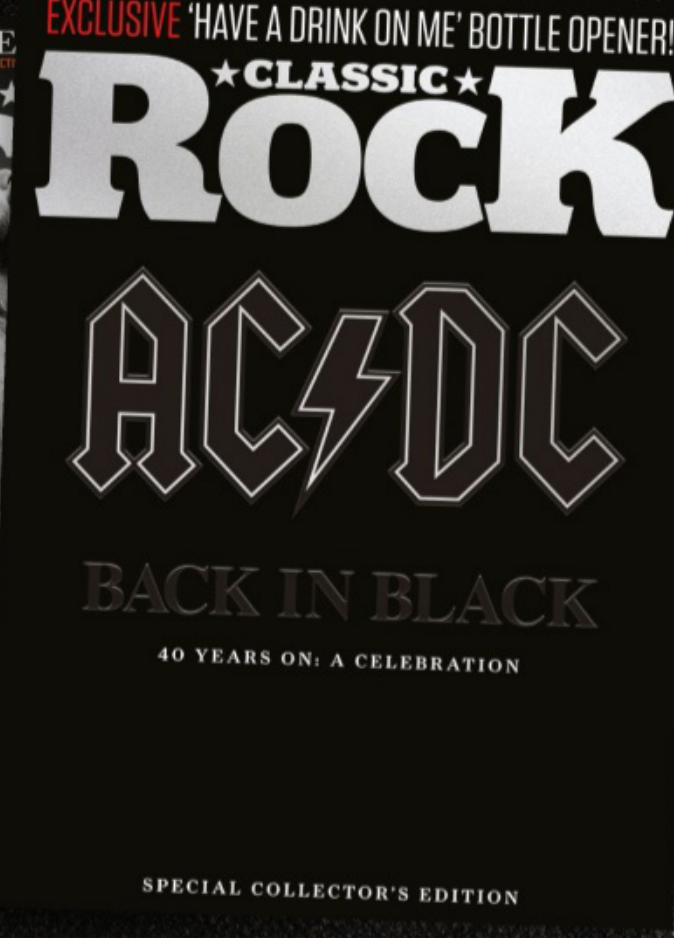
POWERTRIP: PRESS



CLASSIC ROCK

HIGH VOLTAGE ROCK'N'ROLL





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LIVE REVIEWS

LINDEMANN
AESTHETIC PERFECTION/JADU
THE FORUM, LONDON

Germany's patrons of the perverse get their audience into a flap

LOOK UP TOWARDS the ceiling of The Forum and they're there, either side of the stage: Roman columns and giant eagles. The source of much controversy and rumour over the years, some say they're evidence that the building was built in the 1930s for meetings by Oswald Mosely's British Fascists. Some say Mussolini may have financed the friezes. Some say swastikas once lined the stage. It's all nonsense, of course, but the looming eagles do add a certain Teutonic feel to an evening that starts with music that draws visual inspiration from the same era. **JADU** – the stage name of Berlin singer Jadula Laciny – plays what she calls "military dream pop"' the sound of Marlene Dietrich backed by an unlikely mix of Neue Deutsche Härte and trip hop. Dressed in a latex two-piece and ably backed by a Flying V-wielding guitarist who looks like he's just about to clamber into the cockpit of a Messerschmitt, it's a lively start to an evening that gets much, much livelier.

Next up are rowdy American electro-industrialists **AESTHETIC PERFECTION**. Sitting somewhere in the hinterland between 3teeth and Nine Inch Nails (*Wickedness* has more than a whiff of *Head Like A Hole* about it), frontman Daniel Graves is a boisterous presence, while drummer Joe Letz (formerly of Combichrist, and Richard Z. Kruspe's live drummer in Emigrate) is very much of the Tommy Lee school of sticksmanship, with wildly flailing arms and a propensity for going walkabout.

LINDEMANN are, quite frankly, astonishing. It all starts with sepia footage of a man wandering the streets in nappies before the band arrive – all dressed in grubby white, with pancake faces – and launch into *Skills In Pills*. Till does the Till Hammer, there's some artfully choreographed headbanging, and on the video screen a gel capsule is clenched and then gently released from an anus. Yes. An anus.

Last year when Rammstein toured Europe the show was about scale, and fire, and about bombarding and confronting the senses. The use of video – a staple of most stadium shows – was minimal. With Lindemann, it's everything. And it's usually in gleefully committed close-up. *Ladyboy* finds a cigarette being stubbed out on the silhouette of an engorged penis. During *Fat*, Till is pictured oiled up and happily wrestling a pair of very much larger ladies. *Cowboy* features a bucking bronco festooned with dildos. And *Golden Shower* features vaginas. Lots of vaginas. So many vaginas. Vaginas with piercings. Vaginas without. Vaginas of varying shape and hue. By the end of the song patrons are faced with a kaleidoscopic, psychedelic, rapidly flashing wall of vaginas, the band raising their arms to direct the viewers' gaze upon their perky splendour. It's really quite something.

Whether any of this is strictly necessary is moot. It's quite possible Till Lindemann may live in a world of deliberately arrested development, absolved of adult responsibility, content instead to write songs about boners and buttholes simply because his success allows him too. But it doesn't matter. The audience is with him, it feels like everyone is in on the joke – if it is a joke – and, most importantly, it never actually feels juvenile. Instead, it feels like a glorious celebration of peccadillo and perversion. It's funny, and silly, it's involving, and by the end of *Golden Shower*, as 2,000 people scream the word "Cunt!" at lung-bursting volume, you're either a fully committed participant or long gone.

It's also slapstick. During *Allesfresser* a table is wheeled onstage, its tasty cargo an array of oversized cakes. The band proceed to hurl these into the crowd, cream and crumb finding their way into clothing and crevice. And the interactivity is heightened once more during the closing *Fish On*. Till appears onstage with a snare drum, which he plays half-heartedly before revealing the instrument's true, nefarious purpose. Delving into the drum's insides, he retrieves the first in a line of dead fish, which is also tossed into the audience. There's even an actual fish catapult, used to increase range and accuracy. Mayhem ensues. Many of the recipients appear to be willing, although one carcass is tossed up onto the balcony, landing in the lap of someone who immediately flees in horror.

Amidst all this chaos some music is performed. The set is split pretty evenly between songs from *Skills In Pills* and last year's *F & M*, and it all comes together with thrilling cohesion. Till and Peter Tägtgren make their way through the crowd during trance banger *Platz Eins*, their path lit with giant glo-sticks. The riff that eventually steamrollers into *Knebel* might just be the headbangiest highlight of them all. And after a triumphant romp through *Steh Auf* the crowd departs, reeking of fish guts and Victoria sponge, but happy. What a night.

FRASER LEWRY

Peter Tägtgren dishes out the skull-splitting tunes

THE SET
Skills In Pills
Ladyboy
Fat
Frau & Mann
Ich Weiß Es Nicht
Allesfresser
Knebel
Home Sweet Home
Cowboy
Golden Shower
Blut
Platz Eins
Praise Abort
Fish On

ENCORE
Ach So Gern
Gummi
Steh Auf

Till Lindemann has carte blanche to sing about whatever the hell he wants

MATTHIAS MATTIES

NAPALM DEATH
EYEHATEGOD/MISERY INDEX
TRAMSHED, CARDIFF

Hot on the heels of Storm Dennis, Napalm Death rip through Cardiff with Eyehategod and Misery Index in tow, with as much destructive intent. From the moment **MISERY INDEX** take to the stage, the Baltimore death metallers have bodies hurtling through the pit as they pummel through material from their latest release, *Rituals Of Power*. It's a fiercely energetic set, and it makes sludge metallers **EYEHATEGOD** appear slightly apathetic by comparison. The crowd delight in the groove-laden riff of *Sister Fucker*, yet vocalist Mike Williams retorts "one more song and we'll be out of your hair forever", as if the set has been a chore for the band to play. In contrast, Birmingham's grind legends **NAPALM DEATH** are on furious form, whipping the pit into a frenzy with scorching renditions of *Scum* and *Suffer The Children*. But it's not just the classics that receive a thunderous response – frontman Barney Greenway's impassioned speeches on organised religion and equal rights are greeted with rousing cheers. A cover of Dead Kennedys' *Nazi Punks Fuck Off* successfully drives the message home, before they throw a curveball finish with a cover of *White Cross* by Sonic Youth in true, uncompromising style.

SERENA CHERRY

POLYPHIA
TIDES OF MAN/UNPROCESSED
TRINITY, BRISTOL

Sometimes, a band completely blindsides an audience by being far better than anyone was expecting. Germany's **UNPROCESSED** do just that tonight, flooring the venue with half an hour of superb, technical metal that's even more impressive given they're a member down on this tour. **TIDES OF MAN** drop the pace down a few notches, but rather than disappointing, their instrumental post-rock drifts through the room with a nonchalance that is appreciated from all areas and absorbed in spades. Everyone is here for **POLYPHIA**, though, and the immediate call for crowdsurfers creates a dichotomy between the band's charged, ambient post-punk and a bunch of punters acting as if this was a hardcore show. It gets so intense the band have to restart *Goose* because the number of bodies coming over the barrier knocks out one of the guitars. This doesn't deter proceedings one iota, however; the crowdsurfers keep coming, the pits get bigger and the number of voices singing along to every single guitar lick grows with each song that passes. Make no mistake, Polyphia are fast becoming a force to be reckoned with; give it another album and much larger venues beckon.

ELLIOT LEAVER

Dream Theater aren't known for putting on bare bones performances

DREAM THEATER

HAMMERSMITH APOLLO, LONDON

Progressive metal overlords embark on a three-hour odyssey

DREAM THEATER ARE the kings of progressive metal for very good reason. For more than three decades the US/Canadians have forged the power of old-school metal with prog rock's intricacy and sense of the overblown, and tonight, via the first of two sold-out London dates, the quintet remind us why they are peerless at what they do.

With no support band necessary, proceedings begin at 8pm prompt, wrapping three hours later in a standing ovation and, honestly, a fair degree of exhaustion. This is not a show for those with an attention deficit disorder. Based upon the band's 14th studio album, *Distance Over Time*, a first segment delivers an hour of intensity and pure, unapologetic instrumental overload. Introducing the new song *Paralyzed*, we are 35 minutes into proceedings before James LaBrie speaks for the first time to ask John Petrucci, "Are the air guitarists distracting you?" John simply shakes his head, smiling.

The first half of the set is intense, with James often stood in the wings or backstage as his bandmates let rip. Juxtaposed by an intro from keyboard wizard Jordan Rudess, the staccato riffing of *Pale Blue Dot* adds a splash of light and shade, but, compared to the delicacies that follow after the break, Act One lacks a little of the colour and drama that make Dream Theater so special.

Metropolis Part 2: Scenes From A Memory was DT's first full-length conceptual piece and, in celebration of its 20th anniversary, this tour sees them revisit it in its entirety. The album's grisly, spellbinding tale of past regression therapy, reincarnation, jealousy and murder is acted out accompanied by superhuman levels of musicianship and an improved back-screen presentation. Crucially, though, lighter, more solemn moments such as *Through Her Eyes* and *The Spirit Carries On* pierce the unrelenting blizzard of notes as the audience light up the Apollo with their phones, looking like an invasion of 3,487 beautiful fireflies.

Some will try to tell you that DT have become sterile since the 2010 exit of Mike Portnoy. They forget that the past decade has produced a string of successful and ambitious records, and the group's first Grammy nominations. And on triumphant occasions such as this, they're among the most entertaining acts on the planet.

DAVE LING

TINA KORHONEN

Unearth: Trevor Phipps whips up a frenzy

UNEARTH

PRONG

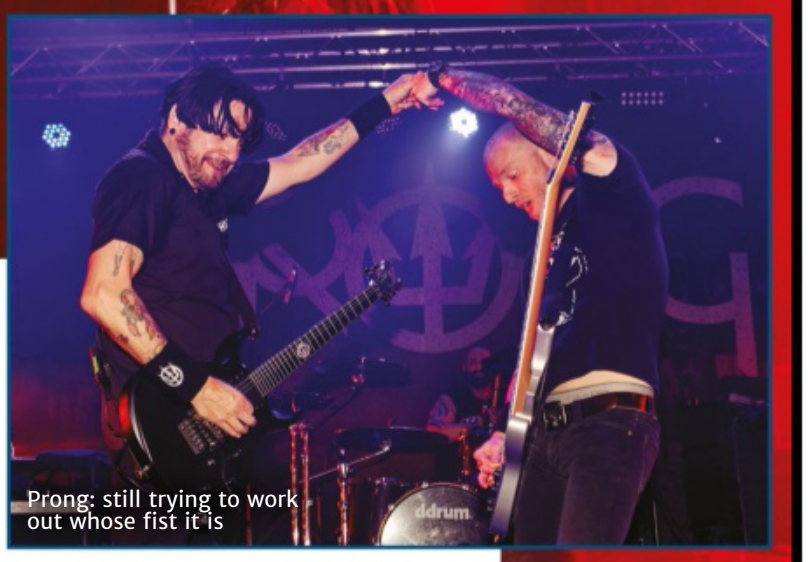
ULU, LONDON

Mismatched metal institutions experience a bipolar night

EVERYTHING ABOUT TONIGHT is beneath **PRONG**. The beloved trio have been fusing punk and metal for 35 years and, the last time they were in London, they headlined the Underworld in a blaze of glory. So, taking the stage before Unearth is beneath them. Playing at a student union is beneath them. And for that student union to be less than half-full is… just insulting. However, consummate professionals that they are, Tommy Victor and co rise above, bringing their energised East Coast attitude to a room neither packed nor enthused enough to deserve it. Their hour is jam-packed with classics, from the raging hardcore of *Disbelief* to the dance-tinged catchiness of *Whose Fist Is This Anyway?* Yet it isn't until penultimate banger *Snap Your Fingers, Snap Your Neck* rears its head that crowd and performer seem to properly gel. Prong did everything right tonight; London let them down.

Although Prong weathered oceans of apathy, **UNEARTH** quickly win over ULU. Fans emerge from the woodwork and swarm like flies to shit, swooning for the melodeath-flavoured metalcore aggressors. Their acerbic tracks are far heavier than what Prong offered, but lack the same dynamic variety. Breakdowns, slow open-string riffs, ceaselessly roaring vocals… these are all mid-00s genre conventions that the Bostonians continue to gladly relish in. Still, with pits opening up from third song *Incinerate* (a choice cut off newest album *Extinction(s)*), people clearly don't have a problem with that. Fortunately, even for those usually unmoved by such things, Unearth still feel like a treat to watch. Frontman Trevor Phipps is imposing and confident, keeping control at all times, while the instrumentalists headbang as hard as their attendees. They do end the evening on a high, although tonight's ultimate legacy will be the unfair imbalance in each act's reception.

MATT MILLS



Prong: still trying to work out whose fist it is

BEARTOOTH

THE AMITY AFFLICTION/HIGHER POWER

O2 ACADEMY, BRISTOL

It's never fun watching a band struggle to make an impact onstage, even more so when it's one of the UK's hottest prospects. For whatever reason, **HIGHER POWER** are blunter than a butter knife tonight; they're met with little response for their material and the biggest cheer comes when they give a shout out to the other two bands on the bill. Next to **THE AMITY AFFLICTION**, it's even more painful; the Aussie metalcore mob have had a new album out for all of three days and there's an packed crowd singing the material word for word. The pits accompanying a thumping *Pittsburgh* are just as bruising. No one is stopping **BEARTOOTH** from glory this evening, though. For a long time, headlining venues like this seemed just out of their reach, but they've worked damn hard to get here and it all pays off over the course of 90 exhilarating minutes. Instantly connecting with the sold-out crowd, their performance is confident and comprehensive, peaking highest with a raucous *Manipulation* and never dropping lower than fever pitch. By the time *In Between* finishes, both band and audience are exhausted but delighted. It's been one hell of a party.

ELLIOT LEAVER

GRAND MAGUS

WOLF

THE FLEECE, BRISTOL

Missing equipment and gaffa tape issues make for an inauspicious start to a new tour, yet **WOLF** battle on heroically in the only way they know how, with *Skull Crusher* and *Voodoo* warming up the crowd's vocal cords. Despite the venue's sound robbing frontman JB's guitar of its thunderous punch, **GRAND MAGUS**'s first show in a few months finds them in imperious form, spanning new songs *Wolf God* and *Untamed* to the 15-year-old *Kingslayer*. The reception that greets the likes of *Steel Versus Steel* and the epic overdose of *On Hooves Of Gold* underlines the Swedes' sheer consistency in delivering undeniable metallic anthems. Energetic bassist Fox can't help but steal the limelight while the understated Ludde propels the rollicking stampedes of *Valhalla Rising* and *Like The Oar Strikes The Water*, with not even the crowd's predominantly tedious heckling – why does it always happen to Swedish bands? – able to dampen the celebratory atmosphere. Voices are already croaky by the time an encore of *I, The Jury* and *Dawn Of Fire* are unleashed, but naturally enough is left in the tank for the theatrics of finale *Hammer Of The North*, with chants continuing well after instruments have been downed.

ADAM REES

JAMES SHARROCK

Ash Costello is a Cruella mistress, but the fans adore her

NEW YEARS DAY

LOWLIVES

02 ISLINGTON ACADEMY, LONDON

The stars align for California's goth-styled rockers

NEW YEARS DAY have visited our shores frequently over the years in support of myriad bands, from Motionless In White to Halestorm, each time in front of increasingly expanding crowds. The slog has paid off. The Cali goths are clearly a band on the rise and this time they're here under their own steam for their biggest tour yet.

Up first, though, we're getting serious Kurt Cobain vibes from **LOWLIVES** frontman Lee Villian, previously known as The Defiled's Stitch D. Also featuring members of The Ataris and No Devotion, the quartet play straight-down-the-line, Albini-loving scuzz that pays homage to Seattle grunge. It's a well-trodden template but *Hey You* is an anthem in waiting.

NEW YEARS DAY's journey to get here has taken them around the houses. They first emerged in the MySpace age with floppy fringes and their 2007, pop-punk debut, *My Dear*, but have since morphed into a much darker, bloodthirsty band. Throughout it all, their silver bullet has been lynchpin and High Vampiress Ash Costello, who has become a commanding frontwoman. In a whirl of windmilling half-white, half-black hair, she stalks the stage, belting out the choruses for *Come For Me* and *Shut Up* and relishing the empowering lyrical material and heavier direction that the band tackled on last year's *Unbreakable*. Grinning at the crowd, she invites us to raise horns and partake in some metal God worship. "It's the easiest metal sacrifice you'll ever be part of," she promises. "No goats, no blood, no virgins…" She stops short at disappointed groans from the crowd. "Oh, you wanted that?" NYD's take on Pantera's *Fucking Hostile* follows in a barrage of industrial-tinged churn and curdling screams from Ash, intensified by a lissome solo from lead guitarist Austin Ingerman. By now, the band have gathered quite the fervent fanbase. During *Scream*, it's "half-heads" to the front - there's more than a few fans here rocking Ash's infamous half-red, half-black hair-dye job – and before closer *Angel Eyes*, Ash and guitarist Nikki Misery gaze out at the room, considering how this "odd band out" could have made it this far. Surely even greater heights await them.

DANNII LEIVERS

Lowlives try to grab their own piece of the limelight

DANI WILGRESS

LOATHE

OMEARA, LONDON

Atmospheric metallers get into the party spirit

SITUATED IN A small corner of London Bridge, Omeara is a lovely venue, full of classic fittings and vaudevillian charm, although not strictly the sort that you would expect to see a metal band in. Unfortunately, despite being aesthetically pleasing, they could do with sorting their organisational skills out, as, with no warning to anyone, both support bands, Bristolian alt-rockers Phoxjaw and seething hardcore scousers God Complex, have had their stage times moved forward to a stupidly early time to accommodate… a birthday party. Many happy returns, random person, thanks for trying to ruin everyone's night. A week ago the Liverpudlian quartet **LOATHE** released their second album, the superb *I Let It In And It Took Everything*, and the fact that the room is now almost dangerously packed, and there is a scramble to get to as close to the stage as possible, is proof that people are already itching to hear these songs live. The new record borrows very heavily from Deftones' brand of esoteric, atmospheric metal, but as Loathe open with a caustic *Red Room* they prove they are far from copyists or one-trick ponies. In fact, it's hard to put your finger on exactly what their live experience is; often they rage as hard as any hardcore band, but the oppressive red lights shining into the audiences faces, leaving the band silhouetted, owes more to post-rock, and the gloriously massive-sounding *Two Way Mirror* would be far more suited to the world's biggest festivals than tiny club stages. As Loathe close with a slam through *It's Yours* the excitement finally spills over and the entire venue surges onto the stage – it's almost like they realise there won't be many more chances to see this band in such an intimate environment. Loathe are in, and they're going to take everything.

STEPHEN HILL

God Complex's frontman wasn't happy about the stage times

Loathe: the icing on the UK metal cake

CROSSFAITH
OCEAN GROVE,/BLACK FUTURES
ISLINGTON ACADEMY, LONDON

By the end of their first song, **BLACK FUTURES** have won over this packed room. Mixing spectacle with an intoxicating hail of crashing drums, distorted bass and choppy samples, the duo come over like Death From Above dip-dyed in acid. This is **OCEAN GROVE**'s first UK show since the departure of former vocalist Luke Holmes and guitarist Jimmy Hall and there is a ton of love in the room for them. Bassist-turned frontman Dale Tanner is the perfect eccentric to lead the Melbourne-based genre-mashers forward and on *Thousand Golden People* and *Junkie$*, they meld grunge, rap and hardcore grooves into party anthems. **CROSSFAITH** have no business being on a stage this small. From the moment the Osaka rave metallers appear, their impact is like having your ears and intestines rearranged by a rampant cement mixer. Chaos reigns in the pits, the guitars are brutally heavy and the drops on *Monolith*, *Freedom* and *Wildfire* are big enough to blow chunks out of the floor. All Crossfaith songs sound monstrous, but what they need is that one definitive, Prodigy-sized anthem (a cover of the Prod's *Omen* doesn't count) to send them truly stratospheric.

DANNII LEIVERS

THE NIGHT FLIGHT ORCHESTRA
ONE DESIRE
ISLINGTON ASSEMBLY HALL, LONDON

There are Friday nights, and then there are *Friday nights*. This one begins with a short set from Finnish melodic rockers **ONE DESIRE**, whose authentically large choruses are hamstrung by a somewhat anaemic sound, but it's the headliners people are here to see. With glow-in-the-dark 'Never mind the Coronavirus, here's The Night Flight Orchestra' t-shirts lighting up the merch stall, **NFO** are on a mission to entertain. They're an effervescent reminder that rock is often at its best when it's about joy, and dancing, and wrapping your arms around your friends and drunkenly bellowing along with a proper chorus at the top of your lungs. NFO may not have written an *Eye Of The Tiger* yet, but hell, that's only one less than Survivor. And besides, they've got several *Burning Hearts* in the locker. *Divinyls* could've been co-written with Abba, *Living For The Nighttime* has a chorus Jon Bon Jovi would kill for, and the disco dreamscape of *Transmissions* is an exultant, glitter-dusted triumph. And as a conga train jubilantly snakes around the room and David Andersson's champagne roadie refills the guitarist's glass, you just know they're going to *kill* at Bloodstock this summer.

FRASER LEWRY

MARIE KORNER

TESTAMENT

EXODUS/DEATH ANGEL

O2 FORUM, LONDON

West Coast thrash titans unleash a triple dose of delirium

IT'S HARD TO believe it's been 35 years since Bay Area thrash peaked, gifting the world with such icons as Metallica, Megadeth and Slayer. It's especially hard to believe inside the walls of the Forum this evening. Tonight's San Francisco-orientated triple threat has long been sold out, and is filled with fans still rabid for speed metal – despite the fact they're more than 5,000 miles and three decades from its epicentre. **DEATH ANGEL** commence proceedings early with the most melodic showcase of the night. Despite being relegated to the opening act, so much of the Californians' 45 minutes scream 'headliner'; the light show is beautifully erratic, while riffs like those of *The Ultra-Violence* and *Thrown To The Wolves* are met with adulating screams. Sadly, the progenitors **EXODUS** don't share the same sense of triumph. Their show is clearly built around the returning Gary Holt, who joins his cohorts on a European tour for the first time since Slayer's retirement. However, guitar issues regularly bring the otherwise untouchable hero crashing to earth. And, although Exodus obviously have intensity on their side, their songs don't have the same heroic hooks as Death Angel's, nor those of the impending headliners. The last time **TESTAMENT** graced London, it felt that the veterans were showing their age. The setlist was awkward and regular instrumental solos halted their momentum steadfastly. Now though, all of that couldn't be further from the truth. As they build to their upcoming *Titans Of Creation* LP, the five-piece use their performance to explore their recent history. It's bookended by appropriately nostalgic masterclasses from the first two albums, *Legacy* and *New Order*, but the main bulk sets the stage for the new music to follow, mining material from *Dark Roots Of Earth* and *Brotherhood Of The Snake*. Chuck Billy et al both look and sound a million bucks, doing justice to elaborate stage decorations with a mighty vocal prowess and a blastbeating Gene Hoglan at his very apex. While the 'Bay Strikes Back' tour may have been designed to honour the past, Testament have laid the groundwork for one hell of a future.

MATT MILLS

Exodus: Gary Holt finally returns to base

KEVIN NIXON

Testament: Chuck Billy sets his sights on the future of thrash

Batushka: the less ceremonial version...

BATUSHKA

MALEVOLENT CREATION/KNOKHRA

THE DOME, LONDON

Schism-riven black metallers refuse to stand on ceremony

KICKING OFF A stellar showcase of extreme metal is no easy feat, but groovy Danish death dealers **KNOKHRA** warm up The Dome to a stifling degree. Helping to shape the iconic Florida sound, **MALEVOLENT CREATION**'s technically accomplished and relentless old-school death metal is an instant crowd-pleaser. They rapidly fire through a setlist swarming with classics, including mid-show tribute to founding vocalist, the late Brett Hoffmann, (*Bloodbrothers*) and culminating in the band's namesake track taken from their landmark 1991 debut, *The Ten Commandments*.

After such a heavy dose of savagery, it'll be hard to top in sheer ferocity. It's lucky then, that we're thrown a stylistic curveball in the choice of headliners **BATUSHKA** – or at least one version thereof. The highly atmospheric Eastern Orthodox Church-inspired black metallers are a far cry from the visceral aggression of the previous acts. Krzysztof Drabikowski and his procession of unholy men enter amidst the ambience of The Orthodox Singers' *We Bow Down Before Your Cross*, lighting the stage with candles and incense before congregating around a casket mimicking a funeral ceremony. The robe-adorned figures – one clasping a sacrilegious liturgy, two others wielding eight-string guitars – deliver the first commandment in the form of *Pesn' 1*. Three tracks in and it's clear that we're being escorted through the dank cavernous passages of 2019's *Panihida*. Following the release of Batushka's much-celebrated debut, *Litourgiya*, there has been a legal battle between guitarist and songwriter Drabikowski and his former bandmate, vocalist Bartłomiej Krysiuk. While Krysiuk's Batushka focuses heavily on the ceremonial aspects of the live show, taking breaks mid-set to perform various rites, Drabikowski's shows need no such added ceremony. Choosing to conclude with *Litourgiya*'s opening track, *Yekteniya 1*, is a surprising – given the current legal situation with Krysiuk – yet welcomed finale to this unwavering assault of one of the most transcendental black metal acts of the last decade.

ALICE PATTILLO

EMPLOYED TO SERVE

PALM READER

MAMA ROUX'S, BIRMINGHAM

Such is the mesmerising intensity of Nottingham's **PALM READER** that not even a diminished early crowd can extinguish their hardcore fire. They barely pause for breath, switching between crushing blasts of nerve-shredding guitars and emotive ambience; *Coalesce*'s epic sprawl commands your full undivided attention. With frenzied bellows of "Let's fucking have it!" echoing, the buzz is palpable when **EMPLOYED TO SERVE** take the stage. It's understandable when their recorded output to date has been so potent, with their current release, *Eternal Forward Motion*, serving as a nihilistic call-to-arms for a disgruntled generation. Decked out in matching garb, the Woking quintet are akin to modern-day street soldiers and tonight's set strikes a balance between unbridled chaos and catchiness. *Dissonant* cuts like *Dull Ache Behind My Eyes* and *Harsh Truth* twist and groove amidst bone-shattering breakdowns and ultra-pissed choruses. Justine Jones pushes her banshee shriek to new levels of scathing intensity, while the *'Owed nothing take everything!'* mosh call of caustic anthem *Owed Zero* has the room spin-kicking and raising fists. Funnelling angst and hatred into 60 minutes of catharsis, you can almost taste the vitriol pouring out of this band – and Birmingham loves it.

SOPHIE MAUGHAN

VADER

DEFILED

UNDERWORLD, CAMDEN

It'll take more than a global pandemic to deter the masses from filling out the Underworld. Indeed, it's enough to warm the blackest hearts to see bodies clattering about for tonight's support, especially since they came all the way from Japan. There's nothing adventurous about the straight-ahead death metal bludgeoning **DEFILED** ply, but the frenzied clatter goes to show sometimes you just need a hammer to nail properly. **VADER** kick into overdrive from the off, barely keeping things on the rails in a way that is utterly thrilling to behold; the live stream will do little to communicate the teeth-rattling incessance of James Stewart's drumming, or the sweat that flies during *Black To The Blind* and *The Grand Deceiver*. Vader grip the room like a vice, new tune *Shock And Awe* indicating staunch underground pride, doubling down on their frenetic tendencies to shun the mainstream's ill-fitting spotlight. That doesn't stop some arena-sized grandeur creeping in during their closing covers of *Steeler* and *Raining Blood* mind, a seismic show of force befitting their decade-spanning, world-traversing career. What a band, what a legacy.

RICH HOBSON

DEREK BREMNER

Vemod: once more unto the breach

CATALEPTIC RITES

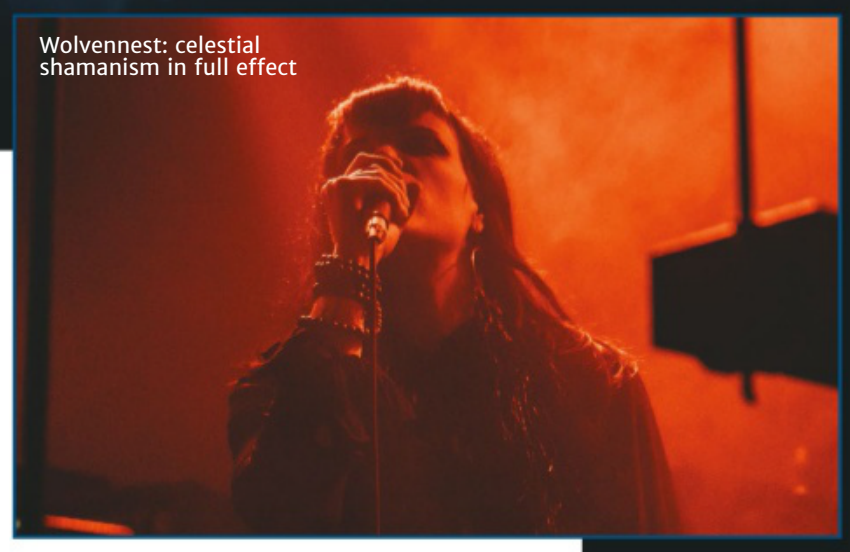
THE DOME/BOSTON MUSIC ROOM, LONDON

Vemod and Wolvennest lead a two-day journey to the outer limits

A NEW ENTRY to London's extreme metal scene, Cataleptic Rites is a two-day assault that celebrates the extraordinary entities lurking in the murky depths of the black, death and doom metal ecosystem. Covered in blood and resembling deranged sanatorium escapees, **MISTÞYRMING** are an Icelandic 'Fuck you' to the corpsepaint/Satan-fuelled mores of their black metal peers. Crafting a sadistic ambience with unpretentious riffs, Mgła-friendly melodies and eerie vocals sung in three-part unison, the quartet stun with a show of dissonance and depth. **SVARTIDAUÐI** are also at the forefront of Iceland's potent black metal scene and their live attack journeys from the melodic to full-on chaotic tonight, although the mismatched tones and syncopated rhythms lack the subtlety and nuance of their recorded work.

Featuring members of Mistþyrming and Svartidauði, **DROTTINN** fire a rocket through Saturday's early crowd, lashing the belligerent brawn running through both bands to a more guttural, death-driven rampage. For all the sonic battery, though, there's a kernel of melody churning in their primordial core that becomes more apparent during the set, as if their velocity is turning white hot. **DREAD SOVEREIGN** offer a breath of old-school melancholia, packed with doom-weighted passages and Iommi-styled riffs that converge in a cover of *Black Sabbath* and psychedelic, acid-rock undertones throughout. Alan Averill's rich tone lulls us back to the doom days gone by. **SATURNALIA TEMPLE**'s more intoxicated take on doom takes on more resonance live than the Swedes often do on record. The monotony is less threadbare, the loping riffs more drenched in atmosphere and the lead breaks slake around the Dome like the tongue of a particularly ancient serpent deity.

WOLVENNEST flaunt abrasive tonality, haunting female vocals and an ambient-infused darkness that offers unimaginable depth. Each instrument and layer gradually crafts a trance-like ritual atmosphere. By the end of the hour, all senses are rewired by their incendiary psychedelia that, alongside the backdrop of space-age theramin, pushes the crowd into an otherworldly, shamanic dimension.



Wolvennest: celestial shamanism in full effect

There are greater heights yet to attain, though. **VEMOD** have always been tuned to the more transcendent end of the black metal dial, but tonight statuesque frontman Eskil Blix is a channel for something yet more exhilarating, sweeping elements of post-rock into the Norwegians' slipstream but reaching a vast, mantric scope more luminously panoramic than the human mind can contain. It's a consciousness-raising end for another marker point on the extreme metal calendar.

IEVA ISABELLA RUIZ/JONATHAN SELZER

TOM RUSSELL

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FIVE MINUTES WITH KIRK WINDSTEIN CROWBAR

His riffs are fatter than a Snorlax, and now the Crowbar legend is finally trying it solo

WORDS: ALI COOPER

What's the worst thing about being in a band?
"The travelling because it gets harder on the body the older you get. Being away from home doesn't bother me as much because my wife tours with me, which makes it a lot easier. I wouldn't be able to do it without her!"

What's the best advice you've ever been given?
"My mom told me, 'If you wanna try and make it in the music business, keep one thing in mind – those who exalt themselves are humbled and those who humble themselves are exalted.' If you're a diva or an asshole, people are gonna humble you, but if you treat your fans with respect and appreciate you're nothing without them, they'll support you."

When was the first time you felt like a rockstar?
"I can't say I ever did or ever will, but the closest thing was the first time the *All I Had (I Gave)* video was shown on MTV back when *Headbanger's Ball* was really something. I'm a humble person and I didn't get into this to be a rockstar, but seeing yourself on MTV is surreal."

What's been your worst experience on drugs?
"I don't remember one particular experience but I did a lot of cocaine for a long time. When you can't go out for a beer without calling the coke dealer, you've hit rock bottom. Luckily it wasn't that difficult to put that out of my life; I erased all the coke dealer's phone numbers and quit going to bars. If I wanted to drink, I'd pick up beer and sit at home listening to music. For any young kids out there – do your best to get away from [coke] as quick as possible because it's a very dark place to be."

When was the last time you cried?
"Not long ago. I'm a guy that wears my heart on my sleeve; I'm comfortable being an emotional person. I'm not boo-hooing all day, I'm an upbeat and positive person but I probably cry more often than most men like to admit. Thankfully I cry more often with tears of joy than for sad things or depression. My wife gives me a beautiful Christmas card and I'll tear up!"

"I COULDN'T GO FOR A BEER WITHOUT COKE"

How has it taken you 30 years in metal to go solo?
"I've wanted to do this for a long time but I just didn't have the time. First and foremost, I'm a husband, father, step-father and grandfather, then I'm a full-time touring and recording musician with Crowbar. It took me years to decide to do it and then it took two years to complete because I had such little free time, it averaged out to a song every two months. It was a very long process but it was very relaxing working at my own pace."

How does your solo material compare to Crowbar?
"I call it 'light Crowbar'; it's a lighter side of my writing personality with the same emotionally heavy and moody vibes, but it's not sonically heavy or in-your-face aggressive like Crowbar. It's much more laidback but it's heavy in its own way."

On that note: how's the new Crowbar stuff sounding?
"It's coming out amazing. We've been writing since the late summer and we're already recording the music for track eight. In my opinion, it's a mature Crowbar 30 years later but it still sounds old school. It reminds me more of *Odd Fellows Rest* than any record we've ever done because the tempos are slower, but it's truly the most doomy record we've made; we're known for mixing in a lot of hardcore beats and faster stuff but this one is a lot of dark, melodic doom."

If you could have five minutes with another musician, past or present, who would you hang out with?
"Phil Lynott from Thin Lizzy. I would like to go to the pub with him, listen to tunes and talk music. He's my favourite lyricist of all time and he's a huge influence on me. He lived his life the way he wanted and his legacy is still strong, but to lose such a great talent at such a young age is a really sad thing."

KIRK'S ALBUM, *DREAM IN MOTION*, IS OUT NOW VIA EONE

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“I WAS OUT FOR BLOOD. THEIRS.”

DAVE ON... HAVING NO LOVE FOR METALLICA AFTER HIS DISMISSAL

“I TOLD HIM, ‘IN THIS BUSINESS YOU HAVE TO EAT SHIT, SMILE AND ASK FOR MORE.’ NOT EVERYONE CAN ACCEPT THAT.”

DAVE ON... EXPLAINING THE MUSIC INDUSTRY TO DAVE ELLEFSON

"MY EXPERIENCE WITH *KILLING IS MY BUSINESS...* WAS DREADFUL. WE WENT INTO THE STUDIO AND COMBAT RECORDS WAS THIS CHEAP, PLASTIC LABEL THAT GAVE US $8,000 TO MAKE THE RECORD."

DAVE ON... MAKING THE BEST OF A BAD SITUATION

“WHEN YOU’RE YOUNG AND YOU HAVE FIRE IN YOUR BELLY, YOU’RE WILLING TO GO TO ANY LENGTHS TO MAKE IT WORK. AND I WAS FIRED UP.”

DAVE ON... GOING HELL FOR LEATHER TO MAKE THE DEBUT A SUCCESS

“DAVE ELLEFSON WAS A COMPLETE, WHITE-BREAD PUSSY FROM JACKSON, MINNESOTA, AND HE DEVELOPED INTO A BASS PLAYER THAT PEOPLE REALLY RESPECTED, BUT THEN WE BOTH GOT SUCKED INTO THE DRUGS THING.”

DAVE ON... FINDING KINDRED SPIRITS

“I GOT TO THE STUDIO ONE DAY AND JAY TOLD ME THE OTHERS HAD SPENT $4,000 ON COKE, HEROIN AND HAMBURGERS.”

DAVE ON... MEGADETH’S FIRST MANAGER JAY JONES BREAKING SOME BAD NEWS

“I HAD STUCK MY FLAG IN THE GROUND AND FROM THEN ON WE WERE GOING OUT WITH ALL GUNS BLAZING.”

DAVE ON... MAKING AN EARLY IMPACT WITH *KILLING IS MY BUSINESS...*

"IT WAS A PLASTIC SKULL WITH TINFOIL AND KETCHUP. IT WAS SHIT."

DAVE ON... THE ORIGINAL *KILLING IS MY BUSINESS...* ALBUM ART

“I WAS SMITTEN WITH BELINDA CARLISLE. SHE CAME TO THE STUDIO AND I’D JUST SNORTED SOME HEROIN AND TAKEN A BIG HIT OF A JOINT. SHE WAS APPARENTLY REALLY ANTI-DRUGS.”

DAVE ON... MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

"WE WERE LIVING HAND-TO-MOUTH. IF WE HAD ENOUGH MONEY TO GET DRUGS AND A HOT DOG, IT WAS A GOOD DAY!"

DAVE ON... GETTING BY DURING THE *PEACE SELLS...* ERA

“I WROTE, ‘PEACE SELLS, BUT WHO’S BUYING?’ AND I THOUGHT, ‘OH MY GOD, WHAT DID I JUST SAY?’ IT WAS AN IMPORTANT SONG AND AN IMPORTANT MOMENT.”

DAVE ON... NAILING THE ZEITGEIST

“AS SAD AS IT IS, HEAVY METAL THRIVES WHEN THE WORLD IS AT A LOW POINT.”

DAVE ON... FINDING THE GOOD IN THE BAD

“I’M STILL INTERESTED IN THE OCCULT. JUST BECAUSE I BELIEVE IN GOD, IT DOESN’T MEAN THAT SATAN AND THE DARK SIDE ISN’T REAL.”

DAVE ON... SEEING BOTH SIDES

“IF YOU GET INVOLVED IN WITCHCRAFT, THERE ARE CONSEQUENCES. IF YOU CAN AFFORD THE RISK THEN, BY ALL MEANS, FOLLOW YOUR HEART.”

DAVE ON... MAKING MAGIC

“I HAD YEARS AND YEARS OF WORK... FILIPPINO PRIESTS LAYING HANDS ON ME AND EXORCISMS WITH INDIAN GURUS AND SHAMANS.”

DAVE ON... *BREAKING* MAGIC

“IT’S GREAT TO HEAR THE NEXT GENERATION INCLUDING ME IN THEIR INFLUENCES.”

DAVE ON... BEING A TRAILBLAZER

"HOW DO YOU MAKE IT? DON'T HAVE A PLAN B!"

DAVE ON... REACHING YOUR GOALS

“THERE ARE NO MORE ROCKSTARS. YOU KNOW WHAT YOU GOT? YOU GOT A LOT OF SNOT-NOSED KIDS THAT WORK AT MUSIC MAGAZINES. NO OFFENCE…”

DAVE ON… HIS LOVING RELATIONSHIP WITH *METAL HAMMER*

“THESE NEW BANDS, THESE SPOILT MOTHERFUCKERS WHOSE PARENTS ARE ATTORNEYS OR DOCTORS, AND THEY TAKE EVERY PENNY THEY’VE GOT AND INVEST IT IN THEIR PRODUCTIONS, SO THEY’VE GOT THE BIG SCREENS AND THE EXPLOSIONS AND THE DANCING GIRLS AND THE INFLATABLES AND THE FUCKING EGO RAMPS. THEY DON’T KNOW WHAT PAYING THEIR FUCKING DUES IS.”

DAVE ON... SUPPORTING THE NEXT GENERATION

“IF YOU HEAR A SONG ON ACOUSTIC, YOU CAN TELL IF IT’S A GOOD MELODY BECAUSE NOTHING IS HIDING IT.”

DAVE ON... THE ART OF SONGCRAFT

“OUT HERE IN THE COUNTRY IT’S A CONSIDERABLY SLOWER PACE AND YOU CAN REALLY LOOK AT LIFE AND APPRECIATE IT A HELL OF A LOT MORE.”

DAVE ON... LIVING IN NASHVILLE

“RIGHT NOW WE’RE PROBABLY IN THE MOST ENJOYABLE PART OF OUR LIVES. IT’S NEVER BEEN THIS GOOD.”

DAVE ON... MODERN LIFE IN MEGADETH

“GROWING UP POOR, I KNOW WHAT IT’S LIKE TO HAVE TO WORK HARD FOR YOUR MONEY.”

DAVE ON... GETTING THAT BREAD

“WHEN YOU LOOK AT THE PRICE OF A TICKET THESE DAYS, THE ECONOMY ISN’T GREAT, ESPECIALLY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE. THEY COME OUT OF UNIVERSITY AND END UP WAITING TABLES. SO I WANNA GIVE MY ABSOLUTE BEST TO THE AUDIENCE. IT COMES DOWN TO BEING PASSIONATE ABOUT THIS STUFF.”

DAVE ON... APPRECIATING HIS FANS

“OBVIOUSLY, AMERICANS WHO GO TO IRELAND AND HAVE A BIT OF RED HAIR, THEY TRY TO ACT LIKE THEY’RE IRISH! BUT I DIDN’T REALISE AT ALL WHAT I WAS SAYING.”

DAVE ON... DEDICATING A GIG TO “THE CAUSE” IN NORTHERN IRELAND IN 1988. OOPS

“THEY CAN TALK ’TIL THEY’RE BLUE IN THE FACE, BECAUSE I KNOW AT THE END OF THE DAY I OWN THEM.”

DAVE ON... HIS CRITICS

“DRIVING IN CALIFORNIA IS SO FUCKED UP – YOU BASICALLY NEED A CRASH HELMET TO GET INTO YOUR CAR.”

DAVE ON... ROAD RAGE

“I’M THINKING, ‘FOR A KID THAT WAS GETTING LUNCH TICKETS AT SCHOOL AND HAD PEOPLE MAKE FUN OF HIM BECAUSE HIS PANTS WERE TOO SHORT BECAUSE HE HAD TO WEAR HAND-ME-DOWN CLOTHES, YOU’VE ARRIVED.’”

DAVE ON... WHAT HE FEELS WHEN HE LOOKS AT HIS BIG-ASS HOUSE

“I’VE VOTED DEMOCRAT AND REPUBLICAN, AND I’VE ABSTAINED… SO IF ANYONE’S SAYING THEY KNOW HOW I’M GONNA VOTE, THEY GOT THEIR HEADS UP THEIR COOTERS.”

DAVE ON… BEING POLITICALLY PIGEONHOLED

“I DON’T EVEN LIKE TO BE CALLED A CHRISTIAN. I BELIEVE IN GOD, I BELIEVE IN JESUS, I DON’T WANNA PUSH THAT ON ANYBODY.”

DAVE ON... HIS BELIEFS BEING MORE THAN A BOOK

“THE REASON THERE HAVE BEEN SO MANY LINE-UP CHANGES IS BECAUSE YOU GET SOMEBODY INTO THE SITUATION AND ALL OF A SUDDEN THEY FORGET WHAT THE MAIN INGREDIENT IS – AND THE MAIN INGREDIENT IS MY SONGWRITING.”

DAVE ON... MEGADETH’S OCCASIONALLY FLUID MEMBER POLICY

"EVERYBODY IMMEDIATELY TRASHED DAVE MUSTAINE. NO MATTER WHAT THE FUCK HAPPENS IT'S ALWAYS MY FAULT."

DAVE ON... THE *RUST IN PEACE*-ERA REUNION NOT WORKING OUT

“YOU NEED TO MAKE SURE THAT IT DOESN’T GO TO YOUR HEAD, THAT IT GOES TO YOUR HEART.”

DAVE ON... STAYING HUMBLE IN THE FACE OF SUCCESS

“IT BUGS ME WHEN PEOPLE SAY I’M MEAN. IT’S LIKE, ‘YOU HAVEN’T GOT A CLUE!’ THE REPUTATION IS STILL IN CIRCULATION, BUT IT’S NEVER BEEN RIGHT.”

DAVE ON... BEING MISUNDERSTOOD

“I’D BE KIDDING MYSELF IF I SAID I’D NEVER THOUGHT, ‘I WOULDN’T WANT TO HAVE TO FOLLOW US,’ BECAUSE THERE’S BEEN SOME TIMES WHEN WE’VE BEEN OPENING FOR OTHER BANDS AND IT DIDN’T WORK OUT SO WELL FOR THEM…”

DAVE ON… BLOWING HEADLINERS OFF STAGE

“IT’S A REALLY GREAT FEELING TO BE ABLE TO COME TO ALL THESE MAJOR CITIES AROUND THE WORLD – TOKYO, NEW YORK, LONDON, MOSCOW, THESE PLACES THAT GET THROWN AROUND LIKE YOU’RE JAMES BOND.”

DAVE ON... THE PERKS OF TOURING

“THE EASIEST THING TO SAY ABOUT DAVE MUSTAINE IS THAT HE’S LOADED, HE’S DRUNK, HE’S AN ALCOHOLIC OR HE’S MEAN OR WHATEVER.”

DAVE ON... HIS REPUTATION PRECEDING HIM

"I WON'T FORGET WHAT WAS SAID AND WHO SAID IT. I'M NOT GONNA DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT, BUT I WON'T FORGET!"

DAVE ON... REACTIONS TO MEGADETH NEARLY PULLING OUT OF A 2011 BIG 4 SHOW

“WE WERE ALL KISSING COUSINS AND SWAPPING CHRISTMAS CARDS AGAIN.”

DAVE ON... THE BIG 4 BEING BUDS AGAIN

“PART OF ME WOULD’VE LIKED THAT SUCCESS. THE LITTLE BOY INSIDE ME THAT WANTS TO BE FAMOUS, THE BOY THAT SITS WITH HIS GUITAR IN THE MIRROR.”

DAVE ON... WHETHER HE WOULD HAVE LIKED TO HAVE HAD A *BLACK ALBUM*

“I DON’T WANT MY WORTH, MY ESTEEM AND MY VALUE TO COME FROM BEING IN A BAND.”

DAVE ON... WHAT REALLY MATTERS IN LIFE

“I DONATED ONE OF MY GUITARS AND THEY SOLD IT IN AN AUCTION. THEY WERE ABLE TO BUY THIS OVEN FOR THIS SOUP KITCHEN.”

DAVE ON... HIS INVOLVEMENT IN OUTREACH PROGRAMMES IN SOUTH AFRICA

“I CAME HOME AND I DIDN’T KNOW WHO TO CALL.”

DAVE ON... THE LONELINESS OF POST-TOUR LIFE

“WITH THE METALLICA STORY, THERE’S MY SIDE OF IT, THEIR SIDE AND THEN THERE’S THE TRUTH!”

DAVE ON... BEING OBJECTIVE WITH THE METALLICA STUFF

"MY BOOK'S A *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLER! IT'S SO FLATTERING TO BE ABLE TO SAY THAT."

DAVE ON... HIS AUTOBIOGRAPHY DOING BIG BUSINESS

“A HAWK CAME DOWN AND TOOK ONE OF THE CHICKENS. MY DAUGHTER WAS TRAUMATISED.”

DAVE ON... THE DANGERS OF BONDING WITH PETS

"NOW, IF ANYTHING COMES INTO THE GARDEN AND WE DON'T FEEL SAFE, I SHOOT."

DAVE ON... TAKING NO PRISONERS SINCE

“I WAS LOST AT THAT TIME, AS EVERYBODY WAS. THE MUSIC BUSINESS HAD IMPLODED.”

DAVE ON... SURVIVING THE TURBULENT LATE 90s

“THESE DAYS NO ONE REMEMBERS ABOUT NU METAL – ALL THAT SHIT THAT WAS OUT! NO GUITAR SOLOS! EVERYONE PLAYING WITH THEIR PANTS ROUND THEIR ANKLES.”

DAVE ON... NOT ROLLIN’ WITH THE NU METAL GENERATION

“WHEN YOU HAVEN’T DONE IT FOR A WHILE AND THEN YOU DO IT AGAIN, IT’S LIKE WALKING ACROSS A BRIDGE OVER A LOW RIVER OF SHIT AND YOU’VE FALLEN OFF THE BRIDGE.”

DAVE ON... FALLING BACK INTO BAD HABITS

“IT WILL ALWAYS PERPLEX ME THAT A GUY AT THE HEIGHT OF HIS POWERS WANTED TO GO AND DO POP MUSIC WITH A JAPANESE CHICK!”

DAVE ON... MARTY FRIEDMAN’S CAREER CHOICES

“I BASICALLY HATE ALL NFL TEAMS NOW BECAUSE THEY ALL HAVE LONG HAIR AND THAT’S STUPID.”

DAVE ON... THE PROBLEMS WITH MODERN SPORT

“I CAN LISTEN TO MY FIRST RECORDS DRUNK OR SOBER. I’M PROUD OF ALL THAT STUFF.”

DAVE ON... STICKING BY MEGADETH’S EARLY MATERIAL

“LUCK TO ME IS NOT HAVING FAITH. I TOTALLY HAVE FAITH IN WHERE I’M GOING RIGHT NOW.”

DAVE ON... LEAVING NOTHING TO CHANCE

“THEY SHOULD CHOP HER UTERUS OUT! NOT REALLY, BUT IT SOUNDED LIKE SOMETHING I’D SAY, RIGHT?”

DAVE ON... PLAYING UP TO THE STEREOTYPE

“BEING A FOREFATHER IS COOL, I GUESS, BUT IT DOESN’T SIT WELL WITH ME BECAUSE I’M USED TO BEING PART OF THE PACK.”

DAVE ON... BEING A TEAM PLAYER

“I CAN’T THINK OF ANY NEW BANDS THAT I LIKE. I JUST DON’T LIKE THE SCREAMING.”

DAVE ON... KEEPING IT CLASSIC

“WHAT WAS MY LIFE WITHOUT MUSIC? IT DEFINED ME. CREATIVELY, SPIRITUALLY, EMOTIONALLY AND – QUITE LITERALLY – MUSIC HAD FED ME. IT HAD KEPT ME ALIVE.”

DAVE ON... A COMPRESSED RADIAL NERVE ALMOST ENDING HIS GUITAR-PLAYING

“I THOUGHT, ‘AM I AFRAID?’ AND THEN I SAID, ‘NO, I’M FUCKING PISSED.’”

DAVE ON... BEING DIAGNOSED WITH THROAT CANCER IN 2019

“I PRAY EVERY DAY. BUT I THOUGHT ABOUT YOU GUYS EVERY DAY, TOO. AND I THOUGHT ABOUT MY FAMILY. I GOT THIS POWER FROM YOU GUYS.”

DAVE ON... GOING ON TO KICK CANCER’S ASS

THE DAVE MUSTAINE GUIDE TO LIFE

60 PAGES OF EPIC ONE-LINERS, THOUGHTFUL MUSINGS AND ESSENTIAL LIFE LESSONS FROM A THRASH METAL LEGEND

METAL HAMMER

ON SALE EXCLUSIVELY WITH METAL HAMMER #334